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N THE AMERICAN EPTUNE

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF MARITIME HISTORY AND ARTS

Special Edition Honoring
James Fenimore Cooper
The Birth of American Maritime Experience



Guest Editor: Robert Foulke

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Fall, 1997

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COVER ILLUSTRATION

James Fenimore Cooper, c. 1820–1830

John Wesley Jarvis (American, 1780–1840)

Oil on Canvas

30 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 25"

Born in South Shields, England, John Wesley Jarvis spent his first five years in the care of his great-uncle John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. He joined his parents in Philadelphia in 1785, and was eventually apprenticed to the print publisher John Savage. Savage moved his firm and employees to New York, where Jarvis commenced engraving and painting. In addition to painting New York society, Jarvis traveled to port cities as far as New Orleans in his trade. He was considered a great storyteller and practical joker, who associated with people such as Washington Irving and Robert Fulton. He was also known to be reckless and a hard drinker.

Jarvis painted numerous portraits of prominent naval figures, including Commodores O. H. Perry, Isaac Hull, William Bainbridge, and Captain James Lawrence.

Yale University Art Gallery
Gift of Edward Stephen Harkness, B.A. 1897, M.A. (Hon.) 1925

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BRITON C. BUSCH

Binding Materials for Volume 57, Including Index



Editor-in-Chief's Note

No one is better fixed to be guest editor of this special issue than Professor Robert Foulke of Skidmore College. A graduate of Princeton and Minnesota universities, he has held numerous visiting fellowships, including Fulbright Fellow at the University of London. An avid sailor, he has raced and cruised Midwest lakes and New England and Nova Scotia seas. He is sometime Sailing Officer at the US Naval Academy, and skipper in the Bermuda race, and he brings a vast knowledge of

the sea and sailing to his scholarship. His publications include the book *An Anatomy of Literature*, numerous learned contributions to scholarly and other journals, and a new book published this year, *The Sea Voyage Narrative*.

The American Neptune is pleased to bring this group of essays together, for they contribute vastly to the literary heritage on and about James Fenimore Cooper.

BARRY GOUGH

Guest Editor's Note

It is hard to imagine what the literature of voyaging might have come to without the sea novels of James Fenimore Cooper — a round dozen that are too often forgotten in the attention given to his Leatherstocking Tales set in the woods and on the prairie. From the first in 1824 to the last in 1849, those sea novels represent and propel stages in the evolution of a central genre in the literature of the sea, both in America and abroad. Joseph Conrad, for one, readily admitted the shaping influence of Cooper's voyage tales on his life and work. In an essay published in 1898 ("Tales of the Sea"), he praised Cooper's "consummate understanding" of the sea: "In his sea tales the sea inter-penetrates with life; it is in a subtle way a factor in the problem of existence, and, for all its greatness, it is always in touch with the men, who, bound on errands of war or gain, traverse its immense solitudes."

Like Conrad, Cooper was extremely reticent

about revealing details of his outer or inner life in the fiction he wrote. This innate need for privacy is somewhat anomalous in voyage narratives, which depend upon the direct experience of the writer for their authenticity. In his introductory biographical essay, Wayne Franklin describes the causes of this elusiveness and develops a method of indirection to get behind Cooper's public mask. A detailed analysis of Cooper's name change in 1826 brings together a congeries of personal and financial details that, taken together, cast light on Cooper's preoccupation with the theme of regaining and recasting identity in the fiction, especially in early sea romances like *The Pilot* (1824) and *The Red Rover* (1827).

The next two essays tackle works in which autobiography is much closer to the surface. Thomas Philbrick, whose earlier book (*James Fenimore Cooper and the Development of American Sea Fiction*, 1961) established the context

for all further work on Cooper's sea fiction, focuses on *Afloat and Ashore* (1844). This two-volume novel deals with the adventures of Miles Wallingford, a young seaman who rises to captaincy and ownership of his own ship during years (1796–1804) of burgeoning American maritime commerce throughout the world. Philbrick notes many parallels between young Miles's adventures and Cooper's own experience on the *Stirling* in 1806 and 1807. He also assesses a new realism that fuses memory and imagination to achieve authenticity and describes the pervasive economic theme of the novel. William Dudley deals with the book that postponed Cooper's start on the Miles Wallingford volumes, *Ned Myers* (1843), overtly neither a novel nor an autobiography but a biography of an old shipmate from the *Stirling*. While *Afloat and Ashore* imaginatively projects what Cooper's career might have looked like if he had stayed at sea, *Ned Myers* details the almost incredible variety, danger, and entrapment of a common seaman's lot during the first four decades of the nineteenth century. At the outset, it reflects Cooper's own early experience at sea, but, as Dudley notes, soon moves beyond that and becomes an invaluable source for the social history of seafaring.

The next two articles shift attention to Cooper as a naval historian, both directly and indirectly in fiction. For the decades before and after publication of his two-volume *History of the Navy of the United States of America* (1839), Cooper was engaged in (and sometimes obsessed by) questions of naval history. Robert Madison looks at one of the novels that grew out of that interest, *The Two Admirals* (1842), as a derivative of Cooper's historical research that focuses on questions of legitimacy within the English peerage and loyalty within the British fleet. These questions reflect the historical context of the Royal Navy but resonate with the passions of Cooper's tangled naval controversies, both in the past and brewing for the years to come. The most vitriolic of those controversies grew out of his treatment of the Battle of Lake Erie in the *History of the Navy*, and he soon became embroiled with the infamous *Somers* affair by association. Hugh Egan examines the behavior and reports of

the principals, Captains Oliver Hazard Perry and Jesse Duncan Elliott, and the acrimonious exchanges of subsequent commentators, notably Alexander Slidell Mackenzie (the captain of the *Somers*) and Cooper. Mackenzie and Cooper exchanged verbal broadsides on the Battle of Lake Erie for five years, from 1839 to 1844, and simultaneously on the *Somers* affair from 1843 on.

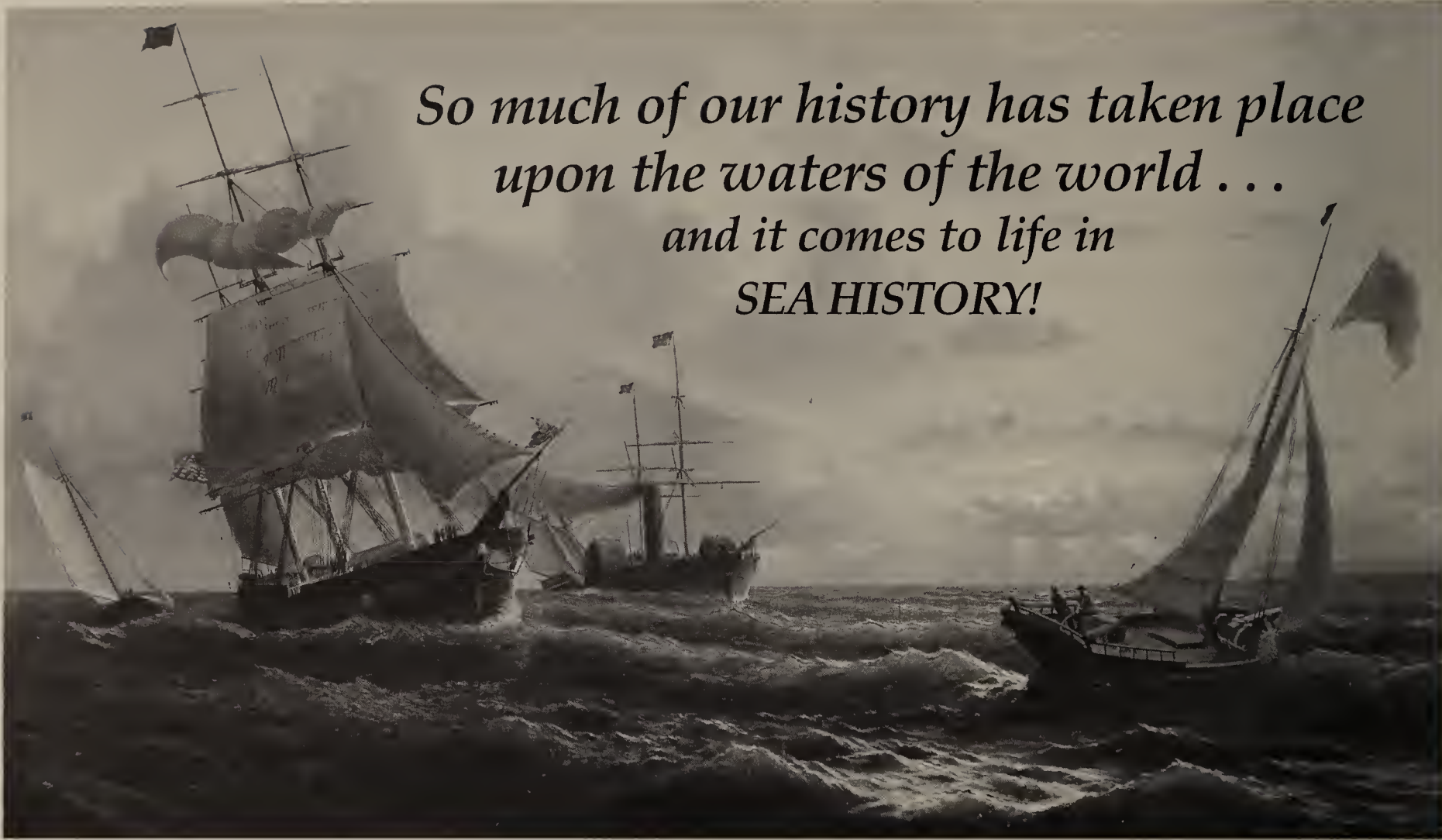
Wayne Franklin addresses a biographical puzzle in "Cooper as Passenger," an article demystifying the series of events that led Cooper into the forecabin of the *Stirling*. Like Dana and Melville after him, Cooper went to sea as what Hugh Egan has labeled a "gentleman-sailor" — that is, one with enough important shore connections to insure that he would not share the fate of common sailors, those whose lives were consumed by shipping out without any commensurate rewards. In "Images of the Sailor in the Novels of James Fenimore Cooper," Harold Langley surveys Cooper's many extended portraits of common seamen and assesses their value as sources of information. Finally, Robert Madison provides a bibliographical note on Cooper's extensive nautical writing, much of which is not familiar to contemporary readers.

The impetus for this special issue came from the 1996 annual meeting of the North American Society for Oceanic History, held at Charlestown Navy Yard from 28 to 31 March. One panel was devoted to "James Fenimore Cooper and the Birth of American Maritime Experience." Four of the articles included here were first given as papers: Thomas Philbrick on *Afloat and Ashore*, Robert Madison on *The Two Admirals*, Hugh Egan on Cooper's involvement in the Perry/Elliott controversy, and Wayne Franklin on the circumstances leading to Cooper's first voyage.

Renewed interest in Cooper has generated a fuller portrait of a major sea writer — one talented in melding imaginative and realistic materials, dedicated to portraying seafaring accurately, contentious as a historian of the navy, and perceptive of the fragile relationship between men and the immense power of the ocean. In Conrad's judgment, "He knows the men and he knows the sea. His method may be often faulty, but his art is genuine."

ROBERT FOULKE

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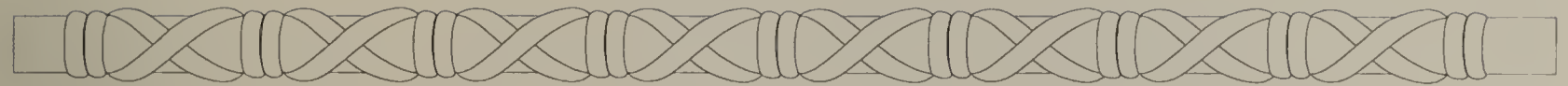


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Introduction: Becoming James Fenimore Cooper

WAYNE FRANKLIN

This gathering of new work on James Fenimore Cooper and the sea may serve to remind us, by its special focus on historical and biographical issues, that much remains to be learned of Cooper's life. I want to consider here some of the reasons for our relative lack of knowledge of Cooper's life. More importantly, I will probe his own responsibility for it by examining a single incident from his early adulthood — his 1826 decision to change his name — and its links to his persistent fascination with the theme of identity. Despite Cooper's apparent volubility and crankiness, his own nature is elusive and slippery in his works, especially his sea tales, which seem obsessed with the fluidity of names and essences. In view of this connection, I think it telling that his 1826 name change was precipitated by Cooper's impending voyage to Europe. His first venture on the open sea in two decades, that voyage reawakened his interest in sea fiction, helping to turn this author of a single sea tale into the preeminent nautical romancer of his age.¹ Laden with private meanings, the name change was a preparatory gesture for Cooper's imaginative reassumption of the sea.

Although Cooper popularized fiction in America, leaving as his legacy not only the sea tale, but also such enduring literary forms as the frontier saga and the Colonial and Revolutionary romance, he alone of all major nineteenth-century American authors lacks a serious, thorough biography, thus remaining both unknown and misunderstood in ways that Herman Melville, Harriet Beecher Stowe, or Henry James do not.

Most Cooper biographies, from Thomas R. Lounsbury's for the original "American Men of Letters Series" in 1882 to James R. Grossman's for the second such series in 1949, tend to emphasize the surface of his public career. Most of them pile up substantial summaries and analyses of his four dozen books, seemingly in lieu of a genuinely biographical treatment of his inner life. At the same time, these and other studies of Cooper wittingly or unwittingly pass around — or leave in circulation without controversion — old, unexamined, and in some instances false, or at least misleading, characterizations, many of them derived from essentially political attempts to pillory him in the press during his own life. Where one seeks the rounded, complex person, one is likely to find a packaged caricature drained of much interest and most blood. Instead of the fierce democrat who sided with Lafayette's effort to preserve the French republic, supported the Poles' effort at liberation, and attacked the rising oligarchy of the United States because of its threat against the liberty of the common citizen, one finds — even, most recently, in Alan Taylor's Pulitzer prize-winning biography of Cooper's father — the contentious, aloof, privileged aristocrat whose roots lie partly in the Whig attacks on Cooper in the 1830s and 1840s.²

Why his biographers have so consistently failed to tell Cooper's inner story is an interesting tale in its own right. Cooper himself must bear a large portion of the responsibility, in the first instance because he prohibited his family from authorizing any biography of him. Cooper's



Cooper as a young man. From a miniature.

wife and their son Paul appear to have taken this prohibition quite seriously. Even the eldest daughter, Susan, who produced many quasi-biographical treatments of her father, obeyed it in the sense that she stopped short of writing a biography and never allowed any other writer, such as Lounsbury, access to the family papers. As an unavoidable result, the drifting misinformation about Cooper continued to circulate, nor did the somewhat more serious labors of his grandson and namesake dispel it. This second James Fenimore Cooper enlarged the family archive significantly by re-gathering dispersed documents from other family members and by purchasing items that surfaced in the auction and autograph markets, and he edited and published two substantial volumes of Cooper's *Correspondence* in 1922. At the same time, he did not undertake a biography himself. While he allowed

several writers access to his holdings, none of them was able to use the archive in the full manner that a definitive biography demands. He also was the source of some "family stories," disseminated by them, which more recent research in the archive has not substantiated.³

The next stage in the story began when the young scholar James Franklin Beard, who completed his critical dissertation on Cooper at Princeton in 1949, recognized the need for a thorough biographical study and convinced the Fenimore Cooper family to grant him exclusive access to the papers. This was the first step in a process that continued to expand with each new accomplishment. Beard soon realized that the enlarged archive of 1950 was still so limited that a much more exhaustive search for surviving materials would be necessary before he could begin a biography. As he located hundreds of new items through a very careful survey of public and private collections, he also became convinced that a fully annotated edition of Cooper's papers ought to

be undertaken. Beard's magisterial *Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper* (1960–1968) remains one of the truly distinguished works of American literary scholarship. Its clear formatting, nearly perfect transcriptions, and detailed annotation have made it, since its publication, into the nearest thing Cooper scholars have had to a biography. Indeed, Beard's introductions, scattered amid the many sections of the six-volume *Letters and Journals*, constitute the best Cooper biography ever written.

Those introductions, however, were necessarily keyed to the specific issues in the papers and were not the biography Beard intended to write. Nor could he turn to that project once the *Letters and Journals* itself had been finished. New items kept turning up (the total now awaiting publication is equivalent to a seventh volume). More importantly, Beard came to the

conclusion that no such project could be brought to an end until Cooper's works had been thoroughly re-edited according to the rigorous standards of modern bibliographic scholarship. Over the decade following the appearance of the final two volumes of the *Letters and Journals*, Beard assembled a team of scholar-editors, sifted through the complex bibliography of Cooper's large oeuvre, sought to locate all surviving manuscript materials (many, as it happened, were held by the family), and endeavored to establish the relative standing of each edition of each of Cooper's works published or prepared during his lifetime.

In 1980, the first edited volume in this monumental new effort appeared. By the time of Beard's death in 1989, twelve more had been published. Since then, four others have appeared, for a total of seventeen. Among those already issued are the classic sea novels *The Pilot* (1824), *The Red Rover* (1827), and *The Two Admirals* (1842). Editorial work on the two "Wallingford" novels of 1844 has been completed as well, although due to the hiatus in the project caused by the flagging support of the State University of New York Press, its original publisher, neither of these nor other finished volumes have been issued. Work on *The Water Witch* (1830) is underway.⁴

Beard's exclusive access to the family papers clearly benefited the scholars recruited for the various volumes of the Cooper edition. At the same time, however, his position as the biographical gatekeeper warned away several of them who otherwise might have undertaken biographies on their own. Many of the items in the family collection, to be sure, already had made their way into the Yale Collection of American Literature, to which the novelist's grandson had given a significant bequest prior to 1931. By the same token, the *Correspondence* and Beard's *Letters and Journals* made the great bulk of Cooper's own scripts available. Enough material remained in the family's hands, however, to discourage any rival attempt on the subject.

On Beard's death, it became apparent that

the chain of causes that had led to his singular authority and access, causes ultimately linked to Cooper's prohibition, had left us not only without a biography (Beard seems never to have begun drafting his long-promised book) but also without an obvious group of scholars whose full familiarity with the manuscript archive meant that one or more successors to Beard might quickly emerge. When Paul Fenimore Cooper Jr.'s collection was deposited in two institutions (William Cooper's papers went to Hartwick College, James Fenimore Cooper's to the American Antiquarian Society) shortly after his and Beard's deaths, literally no one knew the extent or scope of the holdings. By 1990, strangely enough, James Fenimore Cooper's prohibition still seemed fully in force.⁵

Cooper's prohibition was laid on his family, but something analogous to it operated within his own imagination. The lack of a genuine confessional strain in his works, let alone overt autobiography, makes it difficult to map his inner terrain. His sea novels and other fiction, travel narratives, historical texts (including the 1839 naval history), and controversial writings consistently draw on his experiences, but they often do so in a fragmented and indirect way. The case of the Wallingford novels is in this sense exceptional. Only in these books, and especially in *Ned Myers* (1843), in which Cooper "edited" the recollections of his former shipmate, did he obtrude his own memories directly and substantially into his tales. Even *The Pioneers* (1823), based in considerable detail on Cooperstown and the family's experience there, reminds us of Cooper's elusiveness by its setting in 1793, when the author was only four years old. As a consequence of this general pattern, Cooper the man is usually absent from his pages except as the source of strong opinions that constitute him more as a character within the text than a genuine autobiographical subject, making him, in the process, the easy target of countless armed antagonists, from the newspaper editors of his own day to Mark Twain, Granville Hicks, and Alan Taylor.⁶ Sensitive as he could be to criticism, Cooper (unlike Melville) had the tendency to make only masked appearances in his works — except when speaking in his own at times

“preachy” voice. This reticent quality in the artist probably motivated, in part, the prohibition he laid on his family.

Despite these unpromising aspects of his own self-presentation, I think that we can gain access to the inner man by attending to the nuances with which personal issues arise in his writings, thereby supplementing and enriching the manuscript archive. As an example of how we can do so, I want to focus here on what may seem to be a relatively straightforward event of Cooper’s early adulthood, his 1826 decision to alter his name — and its textual adumbrations. I recognize that names, as the outer means by which others refer to individuals, usually have very little to do with inner meanings, or if they do it is because their associations call those meanings into being after the fact. When, however, names are expressive rather than referential — that is, when individuals name or rename themselves — they may reveal a good deal of inner truth. In Cooper’s case, I think this is particularly true. The action of changing his name is laced with autobiographical traces.

James Fenimore Cooper was born in Burlington, New Jersey, on 15 September 1789. When William Cooper and his wife Elizabeth Fenimore named their youngest son, they called him simply “James Cooper.” Not until after both of his parents and all but one of his eleven siblings had died — and Cooper himself had won fame as a writer in the early 1820s — did he assume his mother’s maiden name as part of his own. Responding to his petition, he requested the legislature of New York, which eventually passed an act permitting a modified version of the change. Cooper’s 1826 petition, no impulsive gesture, had a prologue in Cooperstown many years before. Young James’ mother, having no brothers, had sought to ensure the continuance of her family’s name by offering her youngest child some properties near Cooperstown she owned in her own right if he would “take her family name in lieu of that of Cooper.”⁷ When the boy’s father opposed the change, Elizabeth’s offer was put aside, soon to be obscured beneath a rush of

events that began with Judge William Cooper’s death late in 1809 at the age of fifty-five.⁸

Tragic as Judge Cooper’s loss may have been, his six surviving children could look past their grief to presumably comfortable futures sketched by a will promising each of them an inheritance worth an estimated \$50,000. Not for nothing had young James Cooper remained a Cooper.⁹ What being a Cooper meant, though, changed as more severe challenges arose in the next decade. It was not entirely a surprise when Elizabeth Fenimore Cooper, long in retreat from the world, passed away in 1817. By that time, James’ oldest brother already had died, and the other three followed in 1818 and 1819, none of them having reached the age of forty. Because his sister Ann had married Cooperstown druggist George Pomeroy in 1803, James was now the last of his father’s immediate family who bore the family name. While under other circumstances James might have concentrated at least some of the family’s remaining wealth in his own hands as a result of these tragedies, by the time his last brother died the various Cooper estates were a shambles. All James inherited was a mountain of debt, a herd of lawsuits, and a flock of nieces and nephews requiring love, support, care — and cash.

Between her first offer to James and her death in 1817, Elizabeth Fenimore Cooper had returned more than once to the subject. Apparently moved by her arguments but mindful of his father’s feelings, James ultimately offered a compromise: he would not give up his father’s family name, but would add hers to it. Because Cooper later claimed that he would not accept the relatively modest property connected to Elizabeth’s offer, the whole affair had a basically sentimental rationale that the deadly decade following 1809 might well have buried in oblivion. The real challenge for James Cooper in the 1820s was to ensure the survival of the rest of his mother’s children and grandchildren, not her maiden name. He sought to ensure both as he struggled to keep the Cooper family and its property together, although he mostly lost the latter because of dismal frontier land prices, poor

foresight on Judge Cooper's part, and prodigality on that of his children, James included.¹⁰ The effort took a serious toll on James' health. He suffered a serious, permanent impairment that was owing partly to nervous causes.¹¹

Despite all this, in 1826 Cooper decided to act on this suspended promise dating back in one form or another almost two decades. He petitioned the legislature of New York to allow him, as he described the idea in a letter written twenty years later, "to add [my mother's] name to my father's, and to use both as a family name."¹² A tradition among Cooper scholars, running at least from Mary E. Phillips in 1913 to Henry Walcott Boynton in 1931, Stephen Railton in 1977, and Alan Taylor in 1995 asserts that Cooper wanted to change his name to "James Cooper Fenimore"; to date I have located no surviving evidence that would justify this view.¹³ Cooper did not say in his 1847 recollection where he intended to make the addition, and his 1826 petition does not survive to give us his own language at that time. It seems likely, however, that his eldest brother Richard's example, which Cooper mentioned in his 1847 letter, was on his mind in the earlier year. Christened in honor of Elizabeth Cooper's father, Richard Fenimore, on his birth in 1775, Richard Fenimore Cooper was an easy model for James' own rechristening half a century later, although James would be giving what had been Richard's middle name added weight and meaning. The earliest surviving published evidence on the subject points to this same conclusion. The New York Assembly *Journal* first mentioned the issue on 20 February 1826:

The petition of James Cooper of the city of New-York praying for permission to change his name by the addition of a middle surname, was read, and referred to a select committee, consisting of Mr. Sherman, Mr. Root, and Mr. Huntington.

The wording, not yet contaminated by the modification of the request eventually insisted on by the legislature, clearly indicates that the petitioner wanted to call himself "James Fenimore Cooper," perhaps intending to use a hyphen to mark the combined family name.¹⁴ Shortly

before setting sail on the *Samson* for his return to America in 1833, Cooper, in making his final arrangements with his British publisher, Richard Bentley, wrote that letters "simply addressed to me at New-York will reach me." He stressed that "the name of Fenimore should be written in full," adding, "it is the only proper way of writing my name, which is not Cooper, but Fenimore-Cooper, in consequence of a law of New York, the one being as much part of the family name as the other."¹⁵

From these known facts on the issue, we must turn to the question of Cooper's timing and motives. His decision to act on the name change came at a crucial time in his literary career, in between the three early successes of *The Spy* (1821), *The Pioneers*, and *The Pilot*, and the most famous of all his books, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), which he had finished shortly before his petition came before the legislature. Here he was, the last and now arguably the most famous of the Coopers, seeking to soften the finality of that family name by acknowledging publicly his mother's claim on his allegiance and perhaps his identity.¹⁶ Although he would remain a Cooper all along in fact and name, his adoption of his mother's name at this juncture might be read as an effort to downplay one personal past in order to play up another, thereby achieving emotional closure and assuming a new legal identity reflective of his new reputation and self-esteem.

In some ways, Cooper had already played with this theme in his Cooperstown novel. In *The Pioneers*, Oliver Edwards "becomes" Edward Effingham to mark the resolution of longstanding conflicts in his family's past. Like Edwards, Cooper was about to reveal in 1826 that he also had unsuspected legacies to claim and a new name to mark their legitimation.¹⁷ Similarly, much as the character's two names, and his two personae, show a marked difference in social origins, in the novelist's case, the common name "Cooper" was easily upstaged by the elite "Fenimore." The manorial roots of the new name, traced by Cooper to Oxfordshire, offered a more genteel background of the sort for which,

despite his conscious democratic ideology, he always had a weakness. Given the “high” origins of his wife’s De Lancey forebears, the Fenimore connection might be seen as soothing the unease he apparently felt, especially after his own family’s misfortunes, in the presence of Susan De Lancey Cooper’s family.¹⁸

The more common strand in Cooper’s identity was definitely real — unlike that fictionalized by Effingham in his masquerade as “Edwards” — and Cooper hardly renounced it in 1826. In his early adulthood, it did, however, suffer something of an eclipse, marked by the name change more than caused by it, and was to emerge into greater clarity only following his return to the United States in 1833, after he had deployed and displayed his new identity across Europe for seven years. A story worth repeating will suggest how his homecoming undid the shifts of affiliation to be traced in his earlier experience. When Cooper embarked in 1834 on his first trip back to Otsego county since his mother’s death there in 1817, he passed through the German settlements of nearby Montgomery county. Here he encountered an “old Dutchman” who answered his questions about what had become of his one-time acquaintances there. When the German turned the inquiry about, asking, “Are you of these parts?” Cooper replied, “No,” but his negative was less sweeping than it might seem. “No,” he said. “I am from Otsego,” then, as if the phrase had some newly reemerging power, he added that he was “a Cooper of Cooperstown.” Cooper continued the story in the letter he wrote to his wife Susan that evening: “The old Dutchman bowed, eyed me sharply, and muttered — ‘Ah — you are a Cooper,’” a response that Cooper himself welcomed and even cherished.¹⁹

It meant so much because Cooper was now about to reassume his old landed identity and recreate his father’s world. He would acquire the vacant family mansion in Cooperstown that summer and begin to restore it, thereby restoring himself to the town. He had wandered so far from this place and its meanings since 1817 (and, in other ways, since 1826), only to feel

upon revisiting it exactly how deep his attachment to it was. For all Cooper knew on leaving Cooperstown in 1817, he might have been leaving it for good, and he set about remaking himself and redefining his identity on his own terms. The 1826 petition to the legislature named him as “James Cooper of the city of New-York,” with no reference to the “Coopers of Cooperstown,” no claiming of kinship with his father or his father’s world.²⁰ In a passage from *Notions of the Americans*, Cooper likewise referred to himself as a former resident of the Cooperstown area. In his book of Swiss travels, written in the mid-1830s but concerned with Cooper’s experience in the summer of 1828, he offered similar proof of his inner sense of where he belonged in America. Responding to a Swiss woman’s humorous notion that all of America was a wilderness, he had told her “I live in America...near a street that contains eight hundred houses, and two hundred shops” — in New York City, even though his only dwellings there from 1822 to 1826 had been a series of rented quarters. The last of them had been given up before his ship sailed two years prior to his encounter with the Swiss woman.²¹ Cooper became “a Cooper of Cooperstown” only after rediscovering that village and its deep roots in his feelings when he was in his mid-forties.

Iwant to return to Cooper’s motives for acting on the “Fenimore” promise just when he did, which are nowhere directly stated. The mere fact that the planned European sojourn of his family, which began in June 1826, would keep him out of the country for at least five years conceivably influenced his timing. He could not have changed his name overseas, and when he came back his children would have been old enough that the change, intended for the whole family, might be awkward for them. Alan Taylor argues that the legislature may have suspected motives tied to the large indebtedness of the William Cooper estate, for which James remained in part personally responsible. Did he hope that obscuring his original name might aid him in escaping his obligations? Aside from the fact that up to that point Cooper had not so much

fought the losses in his father's estate as he had suffered them, he claimed in 1847 that he had been "extricated from the law" by early 1826 and no longer needed to delay the change out of concern for any legal confusion it might produce — the closest thing to an explanation of his timing that he himself ever offered. Taylor rightly notes that the legal troubles of the family hardly were over by 1826, although his reading of Cooper's claim about being "extricated" probably results from a difference in emphasis. Cooper almost certainly was referring in his 1847 letter to a specific suit arising from his personal debts, which was resolved in February of 1826, the month when the petition was filed, and which had particular relevance to the change of name he initiated at virtually the same time.²²

As he scrambled to keep his own finances afloat late in the previous decade, Cooper borrowed substantial sums of money at high interest from lawyer Robert Sedgwick, with whom he was previously acquainted. The tortuous path on which the two thereafter entered need not be completely mapped here. What matters most is that Sedgwick managed to gain control of a property in Otsego county that held special meaning for Cooper: his farm, called "Fenimore," located on the lake shore north of Cooperstown. Cooper lived here with his family from 1813 to 1817 in a small wood farmhouse while a stone mansion they intended to occupy was being built. As it happened, they left Cooperstown before they could move into the unfinished mansion. Over the next several years, he was to feel the loss of Cooperstown primarily as a loss of his home, but it must have been hard for him to separate the intangible meaning of that term from the tangible one. His father's house, occupied by his mother until her death, fell victim to the collapse of the Cooper estate, fetching a fraction of its value at a forced sale in 1821. When his own poor management resulted in the sale of "Fenimore" two years later, his only other home in Otsego was likewise torn from his control. Sedgwick was a sharp dealer who manipulated the interest he charged Cooper until it was technically usurious (and, in Cooper's view, actionable on those grounds), and he engaged in practices that Cooper thought tanta-

mount to forgery. Cooper fought back harder than he had in other cases, but his basic response to Sedgwick was profound disgust with his ungentlemanly conduct. Part of Sedgwick's sharp dealings involved his subsequent sale of "Fenimore" in such a way that it yielded minimal returns which did not cover Cooper's debt.²³

The losses associated with "Fenimore" did not stop here. In the summer of 1823, prior to Sedgwick's sale, the unoccupied mansion was burned, probably by an unknown arsonist whose grudge against the Cooperstown gentry led him to torch a number of buildings that summer.²⁴ The effect of the fire on Cooper was devastating, especially coming when it did, and may have solidified his sense that the landscape of the past was inaccessible geographically as well as emotionally, thus contributing to his renewed interest in the promise made to his mother. His eldest daughter Susan recalled how she had been sitting with her mother when her father entered the room in their rented New York City quarters in July of 1823 and, without a word, handed his wife a Cooperstown paper opened to the account of the mansion's destruction. Shortly after came the serious reversal in Cooper's health, with its nervous as well as physical origins. The double loss of "Fenimore" to the treachery of a creditor and the violence of an arsonist was deepened by the fact that Susan and James' "poor little boy," their first son, died in the month following the fire. He was also named Fenimore. How, after all these frustrated attempts, was Cooper to either maintain his ties to his father's village or give his mother's memory its lasting embodiment?²⁵ Changing his name was a more durable means of accomplishing such ends, one no one could steal or destroy.

When his string of losses occurred, ironically, Cooper's tale of his family's hopeful founding of Cooperstown was enjoying great success. He had just managed to repossess the imaginative terrain of his family legacy precisely at the time when his legal and emotional ties to it had been so definitely ended. *The Pioneers* was a slippery act of repossession which modeled one of the main characters on Cooper's

father, but gave this fictional judge a single child, not the six left alive at Judge Cooper's death. Furthermore, the model for Judge Temple's single child was not the young author but his long-dead older sister Hannah (named for William Cooper's mother, Hannah Hibbs Cooper), whose fictional rebirth expressed James' perpetual sense of her tragic loss. She served him as a fitting symbol, especially after other tragedies accrued, of all the other Cooper legacies no longer available to him except in cherished memories. Cooper "entered" the story through Elizabeth Temple, but he also recognized in creating her that he was perpetually outside whatever he might recall, as lost to that world as Hannah was. Memory was a letting go: *The Pioneers* was both a re-collection of the dispersed past and a farewell to all of it. Despite her emotional origins in the two Hannah Coopers, the character Elizabeth Temple was christened in memory of Cooper's own mother, as well as several other now lost Elizabeth Coopers named in Elizabeth Fenimore Cooper's honor, including James' niece, who died as a result of burns suffered in an accidental fire in 1811, and his own first born child, who suddenly sickened following James' move to Cooperstown and died at the age of two in 1813.²⁶

Through some inner logic, the young author of *The Pioneers* sensed that he did not belong in the world he was imagining even as he very much wanted to bring it back to life because it had meant so much to him. Perhaps he wanted to reinvent it with himself absent from the fantasy so that he could dissociate himself from the disastrous second half of the family tale, lessening the loss by lessening his prior claim. His recognition of the loss and his denial of it nonetheless coexisted in his imagination. He made his heroine distinct from himself in a number of ways. As if acting on the same impulse toward renaming himself that was to surface again in 1826, he named her, as he did his first daughter and his first son and the farm in Cooperstown, after his mother. If Elizabeth Temple's self-naming suitor, Edwards/Effingham, embodied some of James Cooper's complex emotions, so too did the woman Edwards/Effingham won and wed in the novel, and their marriage effected

James' imaginative return to Cooperstown as well as his final break with it. The drama of the plot, including the part played in it by the effectually expelled Natty Bumppo, was energized by a fractionalizing of Cooper's emotions, which worked against each other in this fantasy as they must have in reality. How could someone who had gone through all he had in recent years, and bore the weight of it in his weakened health, not feel cut in two by it all?

When James Cooper petitioned the legislature for his change of name about two years later, I believe his intention was in part to recognize and symbolically move beyond some of his losses. The legislature, as legislatures are wont, gave and took away at the same time. It allowed Cooper to achieve his ostensible purpose of memorializing and honoring his mother, but insisted that the past dominate any new future he might craft for himself. It approved only his assumption of a largely symbolic middle name, allowing him to become, in effect, "James F. Cooper," much to the petitioner's disappointment, if not anger. Cooper felt that no one ought to know better what suited a person than the person himself — a reasonable point but one that, as regards naming, runs opposite to our culture's practice.²⁷ Cooper could do nothing in the face of the legislature's response but begin to sign himself "J. Fenimore-Cooper" (soon dropping the hyphen) and to assert that "Fenimore" would become a permanent though merely customary fixture of his children's and descendants' last names, as it remains to this day.

Names clearly occupied a most interesting place in Cooper's imagination. One of the first and most successful practitioners of the fictional "series," he created as his most famous character a man whose many names keep shifting throughout the five "Leather-Stocking Tales": Natty, Nathaniel Bumppo, Hawkeye, the "Trapper," the "Man without a Cross," "Deerslayer," "*la Longue Carabine*," "Pathfinder," and so on. This seemingly endless sequence of sobriquets tells us a good deal, I think, about the fluidity of Cooper's sense of self. In his art as in his life, names were some-

thing that could be deployed to signify the serial or simultaneous layering of identity. Cooper's own experience had proved identity to be complex and continually shifting. While the most devastating lesson may have come in the demographic and economic collapse of his family between 1809 and 1819, I suggest that the emergence of his unsuspected literary talent in the 1820s may have given him the best hints on the subject. Having seen so many parts of his legacy lost or challenged in the past decade, Cooper discovered something inside himself that could help him recast and reclaim his identity. So much that he cared for had died despite his feverish efforts to protect and preserve it, and then something that restored his confidence came almost by accident to him — he just happened upon a literary career. It may be that James Cooper changed his name in 1826 to celebrate his own growth, about which his mother could have known nothing, more than to memorialize her in her own right. To become a Fenimore Cooper was to recall both parts of his heritage while being subsumed under neither.

In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper had just shown a continuing fascination with a kind of ontological indeterminacy, stressing how people and animals and things and even places could shift or reveal the complexity of their shapes and natures.²⁸ He also had made the last of his doomed Mohicans a son who predeceased his father, as if the plot marked its author's own death as Judge Cooper's son as well as his seemingly autochthonous rebirth as an author. It was strangely appropriate that Cooper, as he left Chingachgook to mourn his dead son Uncas, petitioned the legislature of New York to take note that he was no longer — or no longer just — Judge Cooper's offspring. What James Cooper had become by 1826 was not, as it might well have been, scripted by his father. How different



Tom Coffin on the Wreck of the *Ariel*.

in this sense was his fate from that of Henry James, Jr., that other son and grandson of upstate wealth, whose art fulfilled a parental vision of greatness rather than amended it. In the long crisis of his early adulthood, Cooper derived his identity from what he happily discovered in himself and then by application and faith nurtured until, with the mixed connivance and direction of the state, he could sign himself "J. Fenimore Cooper."²⁹ In that signature, as in other seemingly minor acts of his life, he wrote in a kind of code an account of himself we are only now beginning to read.

As mentioned earlier, Cooper's 1826 name change was completed just prior to his departure for Europe with his family. Although the Coopers had been talking as early as the prior fall about going to "France for a year or two," their plans firmed up in February 1826, precisely the

month when Cooper's request for permission to change his name was laid before the New York legislature.³⁰ I think that he submitted his petition just as the family's decision to leave America was reached because the change of name was something he wanted to accomplish prior to the planned departure date of June, for three reasons. First was the virtual impossibility of accomplishing the change while overseas. Given the family's present intention to be absent five years at least, Cooper also was concerned that delaying the already long-postponed alteration until they returned from Europe might then prove awkward for the children as they grew older (the eldest in 1826, Susan, was just thirteen). I would argue that a more compelling reason also lay behind Cooper's timing. The larger sea change in his private and literary identity that he had undergone over the past few years — the collapse of the Cooper legacy, the mysterious birth of his own creativity — was symbolized, even as it was literally extended, by the impending voyage to Europe. In conjunction with that outward voyage, the renaming marked a clean break with the spaces, faces, and, in his own case, even the words, the names of the past. In the context of the European voyage, more important than Cooper's desire to free himself from the encumbrances of the family estate and his own debts was his wish to solidify and signify the new identity he had forged for himself in the midst of — and, in a sense, because of — such adversity. The sea voyage to France, his first crossing of the Atlantic since his return to Philadelphia from his stint on the merchantman *Stirling* in 1807, was one of the means by which he accomplished this goal. Another was the concomitant change of his name.

In life as well as art, new names often are useful adjuncts for journeys, perhaps especially for voyages. Cooper knew sailors well enough to understand that they often displayed the merest filament of a connection to their pasts. They bore a cognomen in lieu of more telling names that would tie them to their landward identity, or hid behind a convenient *nom de passage* by which they could be known to their

shipmates for the interim even as it kept the past off limits.

Among the sailors on board the *Stirling* was "Ned Myers." Reputedly the son of a British officer and the godson of Crown Prince Edward Augustus, Duke of Kent (Queen Victoria's father), Canadian-born Edward Robert Myers was known as "just Ned" on the vessel, Cooper asserted. When signing on as a cabin boy, he had veiled his brief but murky past by resorting, Myers admitted, "to sheer fabrication." Other shipmates included "Big Dan" and "Spanish Joe," and two more men known simply as "the Prussian" and "the Dane."³¹ The drifting maritime population was full of such dimly seen men, named and renamed as they went from vessel to vessel, at times without proper leave. Although Cooper himself shipped on the *Stirling* under his real name, he might have been less honest had his family not intervened after he ran away in search of a berth.³² Ned Myers, who likewise had run away from his home to satisfy his longings for the sea, had been taken for dead by his guardian (his parents had died when he was quite young). When Myers surfaced again in New York, word was sent back to Nova Scotia and temporary arrangements were made for him in his new home, but he vacated those and again ran away on the *Stirling*. He offered cautious answers when the mate questioned him. When the captain probed further, he drew on his knowledge of a recent British engagement with the French, knowledge salvaged from the tales of the "sea-going lads of Halifax," to make up a plausible history for himself:

I said my father had been a serjeant of marines, and was killed in the action — that I had run away when the ships got in, and that I wished to be bound to some American ship-master, in order to become a regularly-trained seaman.

In point of fact, Myers was under obligations to another vessel, the *Leander*, then serving as Francisco de Miranda's flagship for his planned invasion of his native Venezuela, at the time he signed on with Captain Johnston. Ned became bored with his port duty on that ship and simply

had run away again.³³

What Cooper learned on the *Stirling* about the shifting identity of sailors came back to the land with him. When he began his literary career, his seafaring characters amply exhibited the pattern. His very first sailor, Benjamin Penguillan in *The Pioneers*, is so fond of telling "a marvellous tale...concerning the length of time he had to labour to keep his ship from sinking after Rodney's victory" that he is universally nicknamed "Ben Pump."³⁴ Cooper's sailors show similar habits throughout his career. Owing partly to nautical practice and partly to Cooper's own literary example, the penchant for such colorful and significant nicknames continued in the works of his successors. Herman Melville reminds us of the poetic appeal of this pattern when he opens his greatest book with all of literature's most famous renaming — "Call me Ishmael." We never, of course, know that character's "real" name. Like so many other characters in the book, from Ahab to Stubb and Queequeg, he has only one handle by which to grasp him. Moreover, Melville's various characters and personae in all his nautical tales seem as

prolific of names as they are of yarns, or indeed berths, beginning with the narrator of *Typee*, a seemingly generic "Tom" who becomes "Tommo" to the Marquesans once he's jumped ship at Nukuheva, only to be renamed "Typee" in that first novel's sequel, *Omoo*. He is as nearly anonymous as any of the latter book's other slimly named characters, from "Zeke" and "Shorty" to "Baltimore" and "Long Ghost." If Melville was following the habits of the sea in marking so many of his characters with the merest trace of an identifiable name, he certainly was also following Cooper's literary example. "Long Tom Coffin," the colorful coxswain of Cooper's first nautical romance, *The Pilot*, lies behind Melville's "Long Ghost," or "Long Jim," also in *Omoo*. While Long Tom bears a family name, a famous Nantucket one at that, it is also thematically pertinent in view of his death and more suggestive of the ocean's hunger for sailors, be they on "coffin ships" or not. Melville drove the same point home when he saved Ishmael by means of the very thing to which Long Tom's family name refers. It is as if, at the denouement of *Moby-Dick*, whaleman Long Tom



The Chase Through Hurl Gate.

Coffin, resurgent from the wreck of Cooper's *Ariel*, rescues his fictional descendent from the fate he himself had not avoided.

Written in the years immediately prior to Cooper's decision to rename himself, *The Pilot* doubled this theme of identity by taking as its title character, "The Pilot," alias Mr. Gray, none other than the historical figure John Paul Jones. That Jones himself assumed his "family" name as part of his Americanization in 1773 (having been born simply "John Paul" in Britain in 1747) made him, as did his still occluded past in the early 1820s, a singularly telling emanation of Cooper's own concerns with identity, names, and the multiplicity of the self. Insofar as *The Pilot* represented Cooper's attempt to touch back to the critical moment of his youth, his flight from Cooperstown in 1806 to run away to sea and, ultimately, become a naval officer himself, the novel may be said to have represented something quite separate among his earliest books.³⁵ Whereas *Precaution* (1820) had been generated by imitation, *The Spy* owed its origins to Cooper's exhumation of other people's memories of the Revolution.³⁶ *The Pioneers* grew from the intensely private and painful memories of his own family's lost domain. *The Pilot*, however, signified Cooper's attempt to imagine an alternate, mostly untried future for himself, a future whose adventurousness aptly expressed his own creative risks in the past few years. John Paul Jones' saga was undoubtedly related to the vein Cooper had tapped in *The Spy*, another Revolutionary war tale, but in this other sense it had less to do with history than with fantasy. Writing it allowed Cooper to prove that he could produce a better sea tale than Scott had in *The Pirate*, a reprise of the competitive motivation that had led him to write *Precaution*, penned to prove he could write a better moral tale than the one he'd thrown down in disgust. It also allowed him to reassume his own nautical identity in what became the first of many such indulgences of his seafaring memories, including the memory of what might have been if he had stuck to the sea.

Cooper's own multi-named forest characters, most obviously Natty Bumppo, suggest that the theme engaged his attention preeminently in his frontier novels. In the case of his sea fiction, the

pattern had an added warrant. Even keeping in mind the "Indian" origins of Natty Bumppo's many names, one ought to observe that it is not in *The Pioneers* that this pattern first fully emerges, but rather in *The Last of the Mohicans*, which followed on the success of *The Pilot* and might be seen as importing from that tale at least some of its own fascination with shifting shapes, names, and identities. Water was a profoundly appropriate image, as I think Shakespeare recognized in *The Tempest*, for such a theme. The key scene in *The Last of the Mohicans* from this viewpoint occurs as Natty, hiding in the cave behind the Hudson waterfall at "Glenn's" with the others in his party, describes the after image of the shape-shifting river as it tumbles and rumbles just outside, suggesting the debt this archetypal forest romance owed to Cooper's memory of *The Pilot* and what he was at work on there.³⁷ Next after *The Last of the Mohicans* was to come *The Prairie*, with its pervasive sense of the tallgrass prairie as a kind of inland sea. Cooper imported that figural apprehension from his reading in the literature of western exploration, perhaps, but its power in the novel derived from the fact that Cooper took the manuscript of the first dozen chapters with him on his 1826 voyage, then finished the tale in Paris, with the result that the sea stood fresh upon his imagination when he elaborated and brought the tale to its close. Crossing on the packet ship *Hudson* in 1826 helped him feel intensely the land-billows of the prairie, which he had never visited.

His first novel wholly written in France, *The Red Rover*, completed this arc of his imagination by bringing him back to the sea itself — and, as it happens, to *The Tempest*. The most nautical of Shakespeare's works supplied more of the epigraphs, or chapter "mottoes," for this second of Cooper's sea novels than did any other text. Although *The Tempest* was among Cooper's favorite of Shakespeare's plays, it also is worth pointing out that it figured more often in *The Red Rover* than in any other Cooper novel. The snatches from *The Tempest* include a set of five passages introducing the critical action in chapters twelve through

seventeen, with two slices of *Macbeth* in between. More importantly, the magical aura of this tale of piracy owes a good deal to the influence of Shakespeare's mixture of sea water and salty legend. While Cooper did not here, or anywhere else, use Ariel's "Full fathom five," the action in his tale is saturated with the sense of profound transformation.

That was one of the gifts of Cooper's recent experience to *The Red Rover*. As in most instances in his career, the gifts came indirectly. Thomas and Marianne Philbrick point out in their definitive edition of *The Red Rover* that two critical voyages in his past guided his imaginative navigation in this new nautical romance. While he himself commanded his whaleship *Union* in the years when he was just launching his literary career (1819–1822), he had sailed into Newport, the Rhode Island location in which he opened *The Red Rover*. Once the new book was underway, the family's 1826 voyage on the *Hudson* provided the clearest charts for the ensuing action.³⁸ The mysterious hero, for all he owed to the conventions of romance and to Shakespeare's own fascination with the theme of hidden or altered identity and dispossession, again sounded the intense theme of Cooper's whole first period, the theme of his own death and resurrection. If, in *The Pilot*, Long Tom must die in the wreck of the *Ariel* — in that novel, the motto of the chapter in which Long Tom dies came from *The Tempest*³⁹ — Shakespeare's influence is more deeply felt in *The Red Rover*. Renewed by the 1826 voyage, Fenimore Cooper's love of the sea was resurgent as he settled in Paris. After washing over the depths of the American prairie, it floated again his personal fantasy of the future he had given up years before, which now became mixed in intimate

ways with the actual future he was writing into existence in this very book. Giving sea room to his imagination, Cooper showed again how indirectly, but pervasively, his autobiography was freighted in the depths of his many tales. Having renamed himself before leaving America for Europe, in this first of his new European tales he could recover much of his old longing for the freedom of his seas.



Wayne Franklin, a native of Albany, New York, received his B.A. from Union College and holds his Ph.D. in English from the University of Pittsburgh. Formerly Professor of English and Professor and Chair of American Studies at the University of Iowa, in 1994 he became Davis Distinguished Professor of American Literature at Northeastern University. He is the author of *Discoverers, Explorers, Settlers: The Diligent Writers of Early America* (1979), *The New World of James Fenimore Cooper* (1982), and *A Rural Carpenter's World: The Craft in a Nineteenth-Century New York Township* (1990). One of the editors of the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, he founded and continues as editor of the *American Land and Life* series (published by the University of Iowa Press), co-edited *Mapping American Culture* with Michael Steiner (1993), and most recently has edited *American Voices, American Lives: A Documentary Reader* (1997) and *Cooper's The Spy* (1997). At present, he is writing the first biography of James Fenimore Cooper to be based on full access to the family's papers.

Notes

1. Cooper published *The Pilot* in 1824. The first novel wholly written after his voyage to Europe was *The Red Rover* (1827), which was soon followed by *The Water Witch* (1830).
2. Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and*

Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic (New York: Knopf, 1995), 425–427.

3. James Franklin Beard, ed., *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960–68), 1:xxxviii; Robert E. Spiller,

- Fenimore Cooper: Critic of His Times* (New York: Minton, Balch, 1931); Henry Walcott Boynton, *James Fenimore Cooper* (New York: Century, 1931); Marcel Clavel, *Fenimore Cooper, sa vie et son oeuvre: La jeunesse (1789–1826)* (Aix-en-Provence: Imprimerie Universitaire de Provence, 1938); Mary E. Phillips, *James Fenimore Cooper* (New York: John Lane, 1913) also drew on some of the family materials. None of these writers was given free access to the collection. Boynton claimed he had been, but his ignorance of the two Richard R. Smith letters regarding young James' running away in the summer of 1806 to join Miranda in the fight to liberate Venezuela suggests that, if he had complete access, he did not vigorously exploit it. His book is the nearest thing we have to a narrative biography of Cooper's life, with little attention given to the literary texts. It has a certain charm, but it does not probe for motives or search out the depths of character. Better on these other fronts is James R. Grossman's *James Fenimore Cooper* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1949), although as with Lounsbury's *James Fenimore Cooper* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1882), its obligation to comment at length on the literary texts means that Cooper's life per se is explored only in brief segments in between critical commentaries.
4. Wayne Franklin, "Cooper Redivivus," *ESQ* 39 (1993): 49–75.
 5. One effect of the inaccessibility of the two collections was that some of the family stories were repeated by scholars who had no means of discrediting or verifying them. Since these stories were repeated by Beard, it was assumed that corroborating evidence was in the archive. Two signal examples of such stories have elicited "set-the-record-straight" essays from Alan Taylor. Although Taylor certainly is in the right substantively, he might have been more understanding of the odd position in which the Beard-Cooper arrangement left the scholars whom he finds wanting. Alan Taylor, "James Fenimore Cooper Goes to Sea: Two Unpublished Letters by a Family Friend," *Studies in the American Renaissance*, 1993, 43–54; Alan Taylor, "Who Murdered William Cooper?," *New York History* 72 (1991), 261–83. Taylor secured Paul Fenimore Cooper's permission to use the William Cooper papers just prior to Paul's death, becoming the first scholar aside from Beard to have unlimited access to the family archive.
 6. On the indirectness of Cooper's presence in even his most autobiographical writings, consider the manner in which he structured his five travel books as collections of fictional letters. Although the texts seem as if they were written in his own voice and are addressed to people (sometimes named) with whom he was personally intimate, so far as anyone has discovered, they are not in fact composed of actual letters ever written by Cooper as a private correspondent. Thomas L. Philbrick's article in this issue of *The American Neptune* exhibits precisely how much can be done with the autobiographical strands of Cooper's fiction. The Wallingford novels with which he deals are exceptional in this regard, as he himself emphasizes. Granville Hicks, "Landlord Cooper and the Anti-Renters," *Antioch Review*, 5 (1945), 95–109, offered a dominant image of Cooper as a wealthy landowner that derived from the soft-focus representation of his economic status in the biographies then available. He also ignored Cooper's overt political ideology.
 7. *Letters and Journals*, 4:200–201. Cooper said that the offer embraced some eight or ten farms Elizabeth Fenimore Cooper had acquired in exchange for some property in her native New Jersey. It was not uncommon in the period for individuals to change their names for both sentimental and material reasons, which often were linked. The English actress Fanny Kemble's American husband thus changed his name from Butler Mease to Pierce Butler, also about 1826, in order to inherit his grandfather's property in Georgia. Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838–1839*, John A. Scott, ed., (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), xviii–xxiii.
 8. Alan Taylor, "Who Murdered William Cooper?," Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 363–71.
 9. Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 372–74; table 12, 436.
 10. *Letters and Journals*, 5:201; Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 374–79, 386–92.
 11. *Letters and Journals*, 1:84, 103–104; Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 400: "throughout the long and painful liquidation [of William Cooper's estate following 1817], James Cooper remained strangely detached and passive, never bothering any return to Coopers-town...." While Taylor faults Cooper for this passivity, one might read it as a further sign of his deep emotional distress over the family tragedy, especially given the fact that his only surviving sibling Anne and her husband George Pomeroy conspired with local speculator William Holt Averell to get as many of the spoils of the estate for themselves as they could, a topic covered in detail in my unpublished manuscript, "Family Tales."
 12. *Letters and Journals*, 5:201.
 13. Mary E. Phillips, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 2–3; Henry Walcott Boynton, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 142–43; Stephen Railton, *Fenimore Cooper: A Study of His Life and Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 64–65; Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 400.
 14. *Journal of the Assembly of the State of New-York; at their Forty-Ninth Session* (Albany: E. Crosswell, 1826), 226 (20 February 1826). Philander Benjamin Prindle, to whom Cooper addressed his 1847 letter on the subject of the name change, left a description of the 1826 petition, which he personally had seen in his capacity as clerk of the New York State Assembly. In a letter to Cooper from Albany dated 29 March 1847, Prindle wrote, "There is on the files of the Assembly of the year 1826 your petition for the authorized

- insertion of 'Fenimore' as a middle name" (*Letters and Journals*, 5:202, note 1. This description may have been influenced by the final form of the assembly's decision). Cooper seems to have understood Prindle as asking permission to print the Cooper petition, or perhaps only his signature on it, in a collection of autographs Prindle was preparing for publication. It seems more likely that Prindle was asking permission to remove the document physically and place it in his private "book" of autographs. If Prindle did remove it, it probably burned with the rest of his library prior to 1890.
15. *Letters and Journals*, 2:412. Cooper further commented in the letter that the use of the full family name in addressing him would ensure mail would reach him, adding, perhaps in reference to his eldest brother Richard, "there is no other of the two names now but myself."
 16. Although Cooper's works technically were anonymous, it was quickly and widely known that he was their author. In *Notions of the Americans* (1828), Cooper went so far as to mention, in speaking of Cooperstown, that "There resided formerly near this village, a Gentleman who is the reputed author of a series of Tales, which were intended to elucidate the history, manners, usages, and scenery of his native Country.... One of them, (The Pioneers) is said to contain some pretty faithful sketches of certain habits and even of some individuals who were known among the earlier settlers of this very spot." *Notions of the Americans: Picked up by a Travelling Bachelor*, ed. Gary Williams (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 216.
 17. The name "Effingham" precedes "Edwards" in the order of history, but the plot's apparent reversal makes the young man's restoration seem like his rechristening.
 18. *Letters and Journals*, 5:201; James H. Pickering, "Fenimore Cooper as Country Gentleman: A New Glimpse of Cooper's Westchester Years," *New York History*, 72 (1991): 299-318; *Letters and Journals*, 5:296-301, 318-321. Of the De Lanceys, Susan's younger brother, William Heathcote De Lancey, later Bishop in the Episcopal Church, probably carried the most gold braid in his name, and may have been the covert object of Cooper's imitation.
 19. *Letters and Journals*, 3:42. Cooper noted rather poignantly in his letter to Susan that when the old man responded to his name, "I thought he spoke respectfully[,] as if he remembered the time when the name had influence in this region." Franklin, "Family Tales."
 20. Compare the language in the certified manuscript copy of the state act, dated 8 May 1826, sent to Cooper by Archibald Campbell, Deputy Secretary of State at the time: "An Act Authorizing James Cooper to assume a middle name. Be it enacted by the People of the State of New York represented in Senate and Assembly that it shall be lawful for James Cooper formerly of Cooperstown in the County of Otsego and at present of the City of New York to assume and take the middle name of Fenimore and shall hereafter be known and distinguished by the name of James Fenimore Cooper," AAS, Cooper Papers, box 5. The reference to Cooperstown here may have derived from language used by Cooper himself in the lost petition, or, to anticipate the story a bit, may have been aimed at pinning down his ties to the Judge's estate and his own still unresolved financial problems.
 21. *Notions*, see note 10; *Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland*, historical introduction and explanatory notes by Robert E. Spiller and James F. Beard, text established by Kenneth W. Staggs and James P. Elliott (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 240-41. The inner geography is a bit complex here because at the time Cooper wrote *Switzerland*, he was residing in Cooperstown in the summer and in New York City in the winter, so the recollection of his 1828 exchange may have been contaminated by current realities. That is, instead of recalling Otsego in the midst of Switzerland, he was recalling Switzerland in Otsego.
 22. Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 400; *Letters and Journals*, 5:201.
 23. *Letters and Journals*, 1:121-24, and Beard's note 2, 5:124-125.
 24. Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 424-25; James Fenimore Cooper, *The Chronicles of Cooperstown* (Cooperstown: H. & E. Phinney, 1838), 71-72.
 25. Susan Fenimore Cooper, "Small Family Memories," in James Fenimore Cooper (d. 1938), ed., *Correspondence of James Fenimore Cooper*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), 1:52; *Letters and Journals*, 1:103.
 26. Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 316 and note 52; Isaac Cooper diary, 6 July 1813, New York State Historical Association, Coll. 100. Elizabeth Pomeroy, daughter of Cooper's sister Ann, perished in infancy less than two months after Elizabeth Fenimore Cooper died in 1817. Wayne Wright, "The Cooper Genealogy," NYSHA Library Notes, 1983, 15. James and Ann's own sister Elizabeth, twin of their brother William, Jr., had died in childhood. Wright, 9.
 27. *Letters and Journals*, 5:201.
 28. Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 2nd ed. (New York: Dell Publishing, 1966), 201.
 29. In his 1847 letter to Prindle, Cooper claimed that he began using Fenimore immediately "as part of my family name, except in discourse," by which he meant that it became part of his signature but that he was still just "Cooper" in conversation, and that he typically signed himself "J. Fenimore Cooper," "abbreviating the James for shortness." For the first surviving use of the new name, see H. C. Carey & Lea to "J. Fennimore [sic] Cooper Esqr.," 3 April 1826, AAS, Cooper Papers, Box 2. Carey and Lea's misspelling was an ominous note for the future, as even some of Cooper's closest friends, such as William Dunlap, persisted in getting it wrong years after the change. For the first

surviving signature using the new name, see Cooper to Carey and Lea, 4 April 1826, *Letters and Journals*, 1:131-32.

30. *Letters and Journals*, 1:125, 127-30.
31. *Ned Myers; or A Life before the Mast*, ed. J. Fenimore Cooper, (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1843), 10, iv, 21, 27, 26.
32. Wayne Franklin, "Cooper as Passenger," *American Neptune*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (this issue).
33. Cooper, *Ned Myers*, 21, 19-20.
34. Lance Schachterle and Kenneth M. Anderson, eds., *The Pioneers, or the Sources of the Susquehanna; A Descriptive Tale*, historical and explanatory notes by James Franklin Beard (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 62.
35. Franklin, "Cooper as A Passenger."
36. Wayne Franklin, ed., *The Spy, A Tale of the Neutral Ground* (New York: Penguin, 1997), "Introduction."
37. Wayne Franklin, "All Sorts of Images," *The New World of James Fenimore Cooper* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 213-48; Wayne Franklin, "The Wilderness of Words in *The Last of the*

Mohicans," H. Daniel Peck, ed., *New Essays on The Last of the Mohicans* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 25-45.

38. "Historical Introduction," *The Red Rover, A Tale*, ed. Thomas and Marianne Philbrick (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), xvi-xix. In keeping with my overall point here, however, note the Philbricks' point that, aside from *Precaution*, *The Red Rover* had "less dependence on fact" than any of the tales he had so far written.
39. James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pilot*, chapter 24. Although Cooper highlighted its Shakespearean associations, the name of the vessel on which Long Tom dies actually derived from that of a French vessel in the service of the United States which sank under Jones' command in the fall of 1780. Charles Henry Lincoln, *A Calendar of the John Paul Jones Manuscripts in the Library of Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 170; John Henry Sherburne, *The Life and Character of John Paul Jones*, 2d ed. (New York: Adriance, Sherman, 1851), 212-13.



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Fact and Fiction: Uses of Maritime History in Cooper's *Afloat and Ashore*

THOMAS PHILBRICK

Cooper's 1844 double novel, *Afloat and Ashore*, marks a major change in the course of his sea fiction.¹ The nautical novels of the first decade of his literary career — *The Pilot* of 1824, *The Red Rover* of 1827, and *The Water-Witch* of 1830 — were works that helped to propel him into the front rank of the artists of the romantic movement that was then sweeping the western world. When Cooper moved his family across the Atlantic to take up residence in Europe that extended over the next seven years, he was quickly received as the co-equal of Sir Walter Scott, with whom he almost immediately exchanged visits in Paris; of Coleridge, with whom he dined in England; and even of the supreme shaper of the new sensibility, the aged Goethe, himself an avid reader of Cooper's early romances.²

Those first three sea novels grew out of and gave expression to the same artistic culture as that which fostered Byron and Berlioz. In them, the ocean is significant chiefly as an embodiment of wild nature, grandly dwarfing the powers and intentions of the human actors who strut and fret upon its colossal stage. Those few superb seamen whose defiant unconventionality, enormous skill, and tempestuous energy fit them for a life at sea become exemplars of romantic heroism, darkly intense, morally ambiguous, sublimely egocentric.

In such a fictional world, history functions chiefly as a means of deepening the background,

enhancing the aura of significance, and removing the action from the diminishing familiarity of the here and now. The evocation of the era of the American Revolution in *The Pilot*, of mid-eighteenth century piracy in *The Red Rover*, or of smuggling in early eighteenth century colonial New York in *The Water-Witch* is there chiefly to surround the fiction in the atmosphere of legend; paradoxically history, the appeal to the actuality of the past, serves to distance the work from the reader's experience, to make the story in a sense less real, more shadowy, more in touch with the absolutes that underlie the world of mere appearances.

A much different program informs the three maritime novels that, after a ten-year hiatus, followed the three early romances. *Mercedes of Castile* of 1840, and *The Two Admirals* and *The Wing-and-Wing*, both of 1842, all evoke the historical past for its own sake, attempting to render it with scrupulous accuracy and presenting it as a major center of interest. These are the novels that follow in the wake of Cooper's great *History of the Navy*, the first edition of which appeared in 1839, and in them the historian competes with the romancer for control of the work, disastrously in *Mercedes*, interestingly in the other two. Although written after Cooper's return to the United States, all three are as much European novels as *The Bravo* and the other two books that usually receive that label, for all three turn to the European past for their materials — to



Scene from the Darley edition of *The Red Rover* (New York: Townsend, 1889). F. O. C. Darley is the artist.

the age of discovery, to the great fleet actions of the Royal Navy in the eighteenth century, and to warfare in the Mediterranean in the Napoleonic era — as if only Europe furnished the grand events and the colossal figures in which formal historiography, and the fiction that tries to imitate its tone and effects, should deal.

In *Afloat and Ashore*, Cooper once more turned to the maritime past, indeed, to the very period in which he had set *The Wing-and-Wing* of two years earlier, here defined as 1796 to

1804. In the new book, everything changes, shifting toward the familiar and near. Two examples may illustrate the tendency of the change. In *The Wing-and-Wing*, the love plot is kept roiling by the clash between the hero's French revolutionary atheism and the heroine's Italian Catholic piety; in *Afloat and Ashore*, the lovers are both middle-class American Episcopalians from the Hudson River valley, kept apart chiefly by the young man's feelings of social inferiority. In *The Wing-and-Wing*, Nelson

unjustly hangs the Italian admiral Francesco Caracciolo in the Bay of Naples; in *Afloat and Ashore*, the hard-faced acting master of an American merchant vessel unjustly hangs a shriveled old Indian on the Northwest Coast.

It is impossible to reconstruct fully the circumstances that turned Cooper from the glamour and pageantry of the European past to the bustling activity of commercial America at the turn of the century for the materials of his new sea novel, but one experience would seem to have been crucial. Writing to his British publisher, Richard Bentley, in June 1843, Cooper announced his intention to "come forth with a new nautical story, immediately."³ In that same month of June, however, he brought to his home in Cooperstown a broken down and boozy old seaman named Ned Myers, who as a boy had been the writer's shipmate aboard the merchantman *Stirling* in 1806 and 1807 and who had written a few months before to ask if the writer was indeed his old boyhood friend. As Ned spun his yarns in the course of a visit that stretched into a period of five months, Cooper soon abandoned his plans, whatever they were, for a new sea novel, and in late July wrote to Bentley that the new book would be Ned's story. It would be, he said, "real biography, intended to represent the experience, wrecks, battles, escapes, and career of a seaman who has been in all sorts of vessels, from a man of war to a smuggler of opium in China." Acting as Ned's amanuensis and editor, Cooper would "put nothing down that I do not believe to be strictly fact."⁴ In early November, the book, entitled *Ned Myers; or, A Life before the Mast* (pace Richard Henry Dana), was published, and Ned himself, with "a handsome fee" in his pocket, was on his way back to Sailors' Snug Harbor on Staten Island.⁵

It was only after all that, in December of 1843, when Cooper began writing the novel that was to become *Afloat and Ashore*. I do not mean to suggest that the novel was to be simply a fictionalized version of Ned's life, for almost nothing of the incidents in Ned's story finds its way into *Afloat and Ashore*. Rather, the five months with Ned turned Cooper's mind to his own early experience as a merchant sailor, encouraging him to remember the world as it was

then and to imagine how it would have been if, instead of entering the Navy as a midshipman after his first voyage, he had, as his character Miles Wallingford was to do, remained in the merchant service and risen to the eventual command and ownership of a vessel.

Out of some such mixture of remembrance and fantasy the new book took shape. Cooper drew upon the scenes time and again, the happenings, and the feelings of his own youth for the materials of his fiction, especially in the account of Miles Wallingford's first voyage. Like Miles, Cooper himself, as Alan Taylor has recently demonstrated, ran away from his inland home to go to sea.⁶ Like Miles, he had crossed the Atlantic to England, running the gauntlet of French privateers and British boarding parties. Like Miles, he had toured the seamy side of London under the guidance of a corrupt English customs officer.⁷ And so it goes. No novel of Cooper's, not even *The Pioneers*, is as autobiographical as *Afloat and Ashore*.

Relatively extensive though they are, however, those autobiographical materials in fact make up only a small proportion of the total fabric of *Afloat and Ashore*. Nevertheless, they set the pattern for the color and texture of the entire work, for the fictional extensions and elaborations from which the novel is woven are held to a standard of plausibility consistent with the actuality of remembered experience.

The primary means by which Cooper enforced his own adherence to that standard in *Afloat and Ashore* was his use of first-person narration, a technique he had not employed before in a full-scale novel. In the course of Miles Wallingford's narration, the succession of fictive incidents blends indistinguishably with the autobiographical basis of the character in a seamless fusion of memory and imagination. Everything is in keeping with the likely scope of experience available to a middle-class child of the new republic. There are no Byronic gestures or superhuman exploits, no participation in great historical events, no glamour and no heroics, nothing of the heightened color and excited pitch



Frontispiece, revised English edition (London: Bentley, 1834). Ferdinand Pickering is the artist.

of the earlier sea novels. There is in *Afloat and Ashore*, in other words, a sharp turn toward realism, toward materials that are consistent with the reader's own sense of the way things are.

The novel is set in the past, the action taking place some forty-five years before the time when the book was first published. Indeed, Miles' first voyage occurs just about ten years earlier than Cooper's own first voyage, at a time when the author himself was a child of seven. Moreover, Miles' eight-year career as a merchant sailor carries him to parts of the world unknown to his creator, to the coast of Madagascar, the West and East Indies, the Pacific coast of South and North America, Hawaii, Canton, the Baltic, the Dardanelles, and the Irish Sea. It thrusts him into situations and actions that Cooper had never experienced — the ordeal of shipwreck, the anxieties of command, and the risks and uncertainties of international commerce.

If these materials were to meet the requirements of plausibility that the tonality of *Afloat and Ashore* demanded, then they had to have the same aura of authenticity as those derived from Cooper's memories — fitting out at the wharves of Manhattan, say, or eating from the common kid in the dark forecastle of a merchantman, or tiding up the crowded Thames in the time before steam tugs. To imbue the purely fictive elements of the book with the necessary verisimilitude, Cooper surely relied chiefly on his unMelville-like powers of invention, his extraordinary capacity to daydream with something of the clarity and specificity of experience, but that had always been his own best trick, as every reader of his Indian novels soon discovers.

For the new realism of *Afloat and Ashore*, he evidently turned to sources that would supplement memory and imagination, sources that were different, moreover, from the formal histories upon which his three European maritime novels of the early 1840s had drawn. Although it is impossible to identify the particular routes by which information came to him in most instances, it is apparent that many of the details of incident and scene out of which the story of

Miles Wallingford's voyaging is constructed derive from Cooper's broad acquaintance with those whose maritime experience went far beyond his own. Among such sources were naval officers, like his closest friend William Branford Shubrick and like Charles Wilkes, who was seeing his *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition* through the press in Philadelphia at the very moment when Cooper was there to proofread *Afloat and Ashore*; acquaintanceships, too, with merchant seamen like his nephews Morris and William Cooper.

More important, perhaps, was his familiarity with documentary sources pertaining to maritime experience, not only with those that had contributed to *History of the Navy* and to his ongoing series of naval biographies appearing in *Graham's Magazine* during the very months in which *Afloat and Ashore* was written, but with the huge literature of eighteenth and nineteenth century voyage narratives, made all the more plentiful by the success of Dana's *Two Years before the Mast* in 1840. The one explicit reference to such literary sources in *Afloat and Ashore* is to Frederick Beechey's *Narrative of a Voyage to the Pacific and Bering's Straits* of 1831, but the source-hunting reader can detect traces of Cook's *Voyages*, Richard Alsop's *Narrative of the Adventures and Sufferings of John R. Jewitt*, Richard Cleveland's *Narrative of Voyages and Commercial Enterprises*, and so on, evidence, finally, not of any scene-shaping prototype à la Melville, but of Cooper's saturation in the literature of the sea.⁸

Thus the historical element in *Afloat and Ashore* is powerful and pervasive, but it is of a sort that offers a special appeal to those who adopt a view of history that attends less to the march of great public events than to the texture of private lives, less to the doings of the great than to the enterprises of the ordinary. We view the undeclared naval war with France not through the eyes of a commander like Truxtun but through those of a merchant sailor, desperately trying to preserve his hide and his cargo from the grasp of a French privateer. In this book, the naval engagements of the Napoleonic wars are not the battles of the Nile and Copenhagen but infuriating encounters with the well-born

younger sons who command British frigates, ever eager to press fresh seamen and to enrich themselves by confiscating American vessels. All in all, the book offers an extraordinarily wide and detailed panorama of American maritime activity in the era before Jefferson's embargo, everything from beating off proas in the Straits of Sunda to driving before a gale through the Straits of Magellan under bare poles; from bartering for sea otter skins with the natives of the Northwest Coast to making up a cargo for Hamburg in the markets of New York.

Afloat and Ashore is something more than a fictionalized evocation of a crucial period of American maritime activity, something other than simply a sea novel. In the last analysis, it is a book about property, a book in which nearly every motive, every action, every concern, has some vital relation to economic value. Just beneath the narrative surface of Miles Wallingford's vicissitudes by land and sea lies a deep stratum of thematic concern, a virtually obsessive interest in buying and selling, borrowing and lending, profit and loss, owning and being owned, prosperity and bankruptcy. In no other novel of Cooper's do incidents, situations, and dialogue so incessantly turn on issues that are in some way or other financial in nature. Everything — from Neb, who is Miles' beloved companion and also his slave, to a young girl's parting gift of gold coins — has an economic value and can be regarded as property; action becomes transaction, whether it is bartering with the natives on the Northwest Coast or mortgaging the family home in Ulster County; conversations, whether between businessmen or lovers, again and again refer to incomes, bequests,

exchange rates, prices, stocks, or interest. Insofar as *Afloat and Ashore* is a sea novel, it is the first one of Cooper's in which ships are put up for sale, used as collateral, salvaged, insured, condemned — treated, in short, as economic instruments rather than as expressions of their commander's will, vehicles of personal freedom, or objects of aesthetic admiration.

This is to argue that *Afloat and Ashore* is far more than a tale of adventure in which maritime history is introduced chiefly in order to lend the action an air of plausibility. Maritime history is introduced into the what-if world of this fiction because it provides the broadest and most vivid tapestry of financial activity that Cooper could conceive of, generating the actions and images that sustain his prolonged meditation upon man as an economic animal.



Thomas Philbrick is an Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh. He received his undergraduate education at Brown University and has an M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard University. Although he has taught and published in several areas of eighteenth and nineteenth-century American literature, his most persistent interests have been in maritime literature and the writings of James Fenimore Cooper. In recent years, he and Marianne Philbrick have prepared critical editions of several of Cooper's novels and travel books. They are currently at work on The Water-Witch.

Notes

1. In keeping with Cooper's own practice, I apply the title *Afloat and Ashore* to both the first and second parts of the novel. After his death, his publishers in the United States generally retained that title only for the first part, calling the second part *Miles Wallingford*. In

Great Britain, the second part has gone by the name of *Lucy Hardinge*.

2. James Fenimore Cooper, *Gleanings in Europe: France*, ed. Thomas Philbrick and Constance Ayers Denne (Albany: State University of New York Press,

- 1983), 148–157; James Fenimore Cooper, *Gleanings in Europe: England*, ed. James P. Elliott et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 122–128 and 260–262; Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Tagebücher*, ed. Gerhart Baumann, 3 vols. (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche, n.d.), 3:485–488.
3. James Franklin Beard, ed, *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1960–68), 4:388.
4. *Letters and Journals*, 4: 391–392.
5. James Fenimore Cooper to Susan Augusta Cooper, 22 September 1843; Cooper to Paul Fenimore Cooper, 9 November 1843, *Letters and Journals*, 4:412 and 425.
6. Alan Taylor, "James Fenimore Cooper Goes to Sea: Two Unpublished Letters by a Family Friend," *SAR* (1993), 43–54.
7. James Fenimore Cooper, *Ned Myers; or, A Life before the Mast*, ed. William S. Dudley (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 22–40; Cooper writing an anonymous review of Basil Hall, *Travels in New Monthly Magazine*, 32 (October 1831), 309–310; *Gleanings in Europe: England*, 30, 192–195.
8. Thomas Philbrick, *James Fenimore Cooper and the Development of American Sea Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 132–140.



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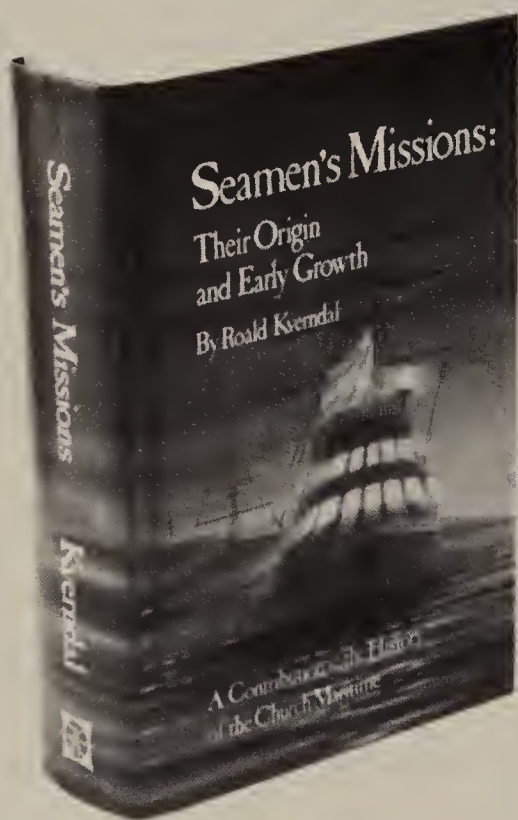
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James Fenimore Cooper's Ned Myers: A Life Before the Mast

WILLIAM S. DUDLEY

The seafaring biography, *Ned Myers; or A Life Before the Mast*, originally published in 1843, is the life story of the sailor Ned Myers, as told to James Fenimore Cooper, an old friend and former shipmate. Some may never have heard of *Ned Myers*, nor have known that Cooper wrote other than romantic novels. Certainly, his literary reputation is based on the famous "Leatherstocking Tales," mostly set in New York state during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but Cooper wrote more authentically than most authors about the sea and seafaring men.¹ He knew them well; he had been one of them, and he had served as a midshipman in the US Navy during the years 1808–1810.²

To prepare himself for a naval career, Cooper spent a year before the mast, 1806–1807, in the ship *Stirling*,* under the command of Captain John Johnston of Wiscasset, Maine. During this voyage to England and the Mediterranean, Cooper became a close friend of the subject of this book, a thirteen-year-old cabin boy named Ned Myers. Cooper's early nautical novels, sometimes called sea romances — *The Pilot* (1824), *The Red Rover* (1827), *The Water-Witch* (1830), and his later ones, *The Wing-and-Wing* (1842), *Two Admirals* (1842), and *Afloat and*

Ashore (1844) — demonstrate his mastery of the seafaring world and its strange, colloquial language. He created and developed the American nautical novel. Thanks to his command of the language of the maritime world, and his emotional link to American history, Cooper made an essential contribution to American maritime nationalism. He realized the power of the past and harnessed it to the conflict between man and nature inherent in the maritime environment.³ His two-volume *History of the Navy of the United States* is itself a classic, being the first complete account of the Navy's operational history from its inception in 1775 through the end of the War of 1812. In *Ned Myers*, a non-fiction work, Cooper provides the reader with a realistic, unvarnished view of the seafaring life which he had used as the basis of his early novels.

Cooper's naval career was short but sufficient to acquaint him with the traditions of the Navy and several of its young, rising officers.⁴ He obtained a midshipman's warrant in 1808. The Navy Department first assigned him to duty in the bomb ketch *Vesuvius* at New York. From there, he was sent northward to assist Lieutenant Melancthon Woolsey, who was superintending the construction of the brig *Oneida* at Oswego, New York. This vessel was intended to enforce the embargo laws on Lake Ontario. At the outbreak of the War of 1812, she was the Navy's only purpose-built war vessel on the lake.

* The ship was *Stirling*, in fact. In *Ned Myers*, it was spelled *Sterling*.

Cooper's last assignment was service on board *Wasp*, commanded by Lieutenant James Lawrence, who sent him on recruiting duty. Despite their disparity of age and rank, Cooper and Lawrence became close friends, possibly because of their sharing a mutual birthplace, Burlington, New Jersey. In May 1810, Cooper requested a year's furlough from the Navy for personal reasons. He resigned his commission a year later.

The present work spans the better part of Ned's life, from his birth in Halifax about 1793 until the end of his seagoing days in the 1840s. These years also encompass some of the most difficult days in the life of the early American Republic, its naval wars with France and the Barbary States, and finally the War of 1812, often called "The Second War for American Independence." Then came years of exuberant growth for commerce. The American shipping industry flourished as it never would again during the years 1815–1860. For sailors, the seagoing life presented a paradox, a harsh world where nature and domineering masters controlled their destiny, yet a controlled, disciplined life where for reasons of survival, a seaman's nomadic, unbridled instincts were channeled and used for profit. Even the seamen profited, for this was a time when American shipowners paid higher wages than foreign companies in a labor market short of experienced hands.

Ned Myer's memoir offers an unparalleled view of seafaring life on the lower deck. By Cooper's tally, Myers had been a crew member of seventy-two different vessels, some in which he made several voyages. When adding to that number the ships in which Ned was a prisoner or civilian passenger, the total may have been closer to one hundred. His life afloat amounted to twenty-five years out of sight of land. Ned, for reasons he will reveal, preferred to sail "before the mast" as a common seaman despite years of experience which might have qualified him for command at sea. He had his turns as second mate and first mate, and showed proficiency in numerous dangerous situations, saving the ship, cargo, and

crew. He usually rejected offers of greater responsibility. His life held much inner conflict, and he expressed unrequited desires for greater companionship and closeness to family. It was characteristic of him, however, that when these opportunities occasionally arose, he turned away. While there is not enough evidence to sketch a psychological portrait, there is much on which to speculate. He mentioned only one female relationship and did not apparently indulge himself in the promiscuity commonly associated with sailors. If he did, he did not disclose it, though Cooper may have exercised editorial discretion, omitting the mention of adventures that might make his readers blush.

Ned had many acquaintances but few close friends, perhaps because so many died relatively young from accidents, disease, and dissipation. He was fine company and easily established rapport with strangers, even those one might think antagonistic. Between voyages, he spent his hard-earned dollars freely on friends, meals, and liquor. He seemed to own nothing but his clothes and a few nautical instruments. Still, he knew how to lay away his property and a few dollars, leaving these in safekeeping with a friendly landlord for repossession on returning from his frequent voyages. He was not illiterate, and knew enough mathematics to navigate. He did not say much of writing letters, but he grew fond of the Bible, tracts, and other religious works as he grew older. He possessed an active, though frequently dormant, conscience which came back to haunt him as he sensed how his opportunities had evaporated. His bondage to liquor became acute.

Ned was fortunate that churchmen had founded organizations to minister to seamen by the 1820s and 1830s.⁵ Thanks to these influences and his own survival instincts, Ned became, by the end of his seafaring days, a reclaimed soul. It is very likely that this memoir would never have been written had he not had a conscience and a strong will to set things right. Nearly fifty years of age in 1843, he probably looked more than his years when Cooper took down his life's story.

Although Ned spent the greater number of his years in merchant sail, he was also a naval veteran. His love of the service and patriotism



USS *Brandywine* (1825–1864). 44-gun frigate off Malta on 6 November 1831, in company with the USS *Concord* (1830–1842). Commodore Biddle commanded the *Brandywine* and Captain M. C. Perry commanded the *Concord*. Painting by N. Cammilliari. Courtesy of the US Naval Historical Center.

ring clear, and there is never a harsh word for his treatment, though he did admit that the Navy did not pay as well as merchantmen. Ned served as an able seaman on Lake Ontario during the War of 1812. He virtually jumped from the pages of the *National Geographic* in 1983, when the Society published a remarkable article on the discovery of the US Navy schooners *Hamilton* and *Scourge*.⁶ Thanks to the historical curiosity of Canadian Daniel A. Nelson, these war vessels were located by sonar search 280 feet below the surface of the lake in 1973. Two years later, a side-scan sonar search in the same area provided a more positive identification of *Scourge*, then *Hamilton*, 1,500 feet away on the lake floor. Nine years later, a team of archaeologists, underwater scientists, and National Geographic Society representatives photographed the schooners with a remotely piloted vehicle.

Ned Myers served in *Scourge* and was one of the few sailors to survive her sinking. His narrative, as contained in Cooper's *Ned Myers*, vividly describes his escape from the sinking schoo-

ner. The *Geographic* excerpted Ned's account in an illustrated five-page spread in the midst of Nelson's article on the finding of the schooners. Finding Myer's account was, for historians, almost as exciting as the archaeological discovery.⁷ The excerpt from Cooper's *Ned Myers* provides the only detailed explanation of what happened to the schooners lost 170 years earlier. In addition, Ned provides us with a unique account of the capture of the schooners *Julia* and *Growler* a few days later. What only a few Cooper scholars knew, others had to rediscover. Cooper's own *History of the Navy of the United States*, published in 1839, contains just a summary of the tragic sinking of *Scourge*.⁸

Ned's naval career, as distinguished from his many merchant voyages, is an important though interrupted theme and deserves summation. He was rescued by the armed schooner *Julia*, but she soon after was captured with *Growler*, and Ned spent the next nineteen months as a prisoner of war. Freed in March 1815, he entered merchant sail and did not return to a naval vessel for



USS *Constellation* (1797–1854). Painting by Rear Admiral John W. Schmidt, USN (ret). Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel M. Jemison.

twelve years. In 1827, he signed on *Delaware*, 80-guns, under Commodore John Downes for an enlistment that took him to the Mediterranean and back in 1831. He joined the frigate *Brandywine* and cruised the Gulf of Mexico. In 1832, he found himself in the Revenue Cutter Service off Charleston during the Nullification crisis, serving for most of the time in the cutter *Jackson*. The excitement ended in March, 1832, and the government discharged the extra hands it had hired for the cutters.

After a three-year stint in merchantmen, Ned returned to the Navy and signed on the frigate *Constellation*, in which he saw duty in the Gulf of Mexico during the "Florida War" (Seminole War) in 1835–1836, and later transferred to the sloop-of-war *St. Louis*. After a severe injury, he spent some time in the Pensacola Naval Hospital and was finally invalided back to New York. He traveled to Washington, DC, where he visited the Navy Yard and paid a call on Commodore Isaac Chauncey, then serving on the Board of Navy

Commissioners. The old Lake Ontario commander was much interested in seeing Myers and questioned him at length on the sinking of *Scourge*. Navy Department clerks set him to work on a pension application, but it was several years before Ned obtained anything but a small amount in compensation for the injury that had put him in the Pensacola Naval Hospital. In August 1840, Ned returned from his last voyage, during which he almost died in Batavia [Djakarta]. He applied for admission to the Sailor's Snug Harbor, a well-endowed home for retired mariners on Staten Island near New York.⁹ The Navy Pension Office had by this time cleared his application, and the money was waiting for him.

By the time Cooper was reunited with his former shipmate in 1843, he had firmly established his literary reputation and had produced a number of his nautical novels and *The History of the Navy of the United States*. Ned's arrival on the scene was for Cooper a gift from the gods. He wrote Cooper a letter from the Sailor's Snug

Harbor, asking if he were the man Ned knew as a boy on board *Stirling*. Cooper replied quickly that this was so. They met briefly in New York, and Cooper soon invited Myers to his home in Cooperstown on Lake Otsego, where the two spent five months closely examining Ned's seagoing career. Here the famous author could see himself through another's eyes and at the same time share his experiences.

At the time Cooper and Myers were collaborating, the American public's taste for seafaring literature was changing. The popularity of the "romance of the sea" was being replaced by harsher, more perceptive portrayals of seamen who risked all manner of dangers and lived with minimum comfort, rudderless in the face of almost dictatorial authority, nature's whims, and ill-educated, occasionally degraded companions. Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* had appeared only three years before, and the Navy's investigations of the infamous Somers "mutiny" and Captain Alexander Slidell McKenzie's shipboard executions of the alleged conspirators were the cause of national debate. Progressives and churchmen were beginning to shoulder the cause of reform within the US Navy and the Merchant Marine. Their goals were the elimination of corporal punishment and the consumption of alcohol on board ship.¹⁰ With Ned Myers' story, Cooper had the materials to equal Dana's literary triumph and ride the crest of the new literary trend. For all of Cooper's efforts, though, *Ned Myers* was not as well received as *Two Years Before the Mast*.¹¹ Dana's memoir had set the standard. Critics did not applaud Cooper's work, even though *Ned Myers* had wider scope, telling of an entire life "before the mast," global in its seafaring. With *Ned*

Myers, Cooper responded to Dana's book, replicating its maritime realism and reinforcing the technical authenticity of his early sea novels. Cooper had a stake in the truth and was at pains to display that approach in his *History of the Navy of the United States*.

Precisely how Cooper wrote *Ned Myers* is obscure. The literary conventions preserved in the work are Cooper's, but the terseness of the passages, the harshness of scenes, and the honesty of characterization is authentic. It would have been difficult for Cooper to have "invented" *Ned Myers*.¹² Cooper himself claimed that he seldom "interposed his own greater knowledge of the world, between Ned's more limited experience and the narrative; but, this has been done cautiously, and in only a few



Commodore Isaac Chauncey, USN. Courtesy US Naval Historical Center.

cases in which there can be little doubt that the narrator has been deceived by appearances, misled by ignorance." Cooper assumed the first person, writing as if he were Ned Myers, and the assumption of that identity "dictates its own willful pattern in the prose."¹³

If *Ned Myers* had a "happy ending," with Ned completing his nomadic seafaring and swearing off liquor, the rest of Ned Myers' life did not. Cooper paid Ned an advance of his share of the royalties and helped him find a job at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. After Ned married a widow with children, Cooper took one of the stepdaughters in as a domestic servant. Two years later, Ned relapsed into his old habits. He died, probably of alcoholism, in 1849. Cooper wrote Ned's will and later helped his family with their bills.¹⁴

The importance of *Ned Myers* for modern readers is contained in what we learn about the subject and his companions on the lower deck. The social history of seafaring is still in its infancy, whether we are discussing naval or merchant ships. We need to know why men went to sea, how they looked at their captains and mates, what they thought about their treatment, when and why they got sick, who took care of them when they did, and what happened to them in their old age. The dangers of seafaring in the age of sail may be familiar to some readers, but to others the fragility of that existence may not be apparent. Not many years ago, the capsizing and sinking of the *Pride of Baltimore*, designed along the authentic lines of a War of 1812 privateer, brought home to many observers

the fact that this event was quite common in the early nineteenth century. For men like Ned Myers, the possibilities of piracy, dismasting, shipwreck, impressment, punishment by flogging, insanity at sea, alcoholism, unfaithful landlords, and penury ashore were altogether real.

The study of American maritime culture includes the mental life of the seaman, his worries, his concept of duty, his reading habits, his concerns for his shipmates, his legal rights and responsibilities, and his thoughts on religion. All of these can be gleaned from accounts like that of Ned Myers. Beyond this, *Ned Myers* is a remarkable tale of adventure on the high seas. It has suspense, excitement, retribution, suffering, remorse, and moments of happiness. From a historian's perspective, *Ned Myers* is a work both of art and social comment, and its influence will last far longer than the author would have dreamed.



Dr. William S. Dudley served on active duty in the USS Cromwell (DE-1014), earned a Ph.D. in history at Columbia University, and taught history at Southern Methodist University. He joined the Naval Historical Center in 1977 and is currently serving as its director. The views expressed here are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of the Navy

Notes

1. For a general introduction to Cooper and other writers of his period, see Emory Elliott, ed. *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). H. Daniel Peck's essay, "James Fenimore Cooper and the Writers of the Frontier," 240-261, provides a balanced view of Cooper's craft.
2. James Franklin Beard, ed. *The Letters and Journals of*

James Fenimore Cooper, 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1:3-22.

3. Thomas Philbrick, *James Fenimore Cooper and the Development of American Sea Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961).
4. William Branford Shubrick, later Rear Admiral, and Cooper became lifelong friends as a result of Cooper's service in Wasp, under Lieutenant James Lawrence.

- Beard, *Letters and Journals*, 1:69, note.
5. Roald Kverndal, *Seamen's Missions: Their Origin and Early Growth* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1986).
 6. Daniel A. Nelson, "Ghost Ships of the War of 1812," *National Geographic*, 163:3 (March, 1983), 289-313. For a more complete treatment of the discovery of the schooners and their historical context, see Emily Cain, *Ghost Ships* (New York and Toronto: Beaufort Books, 1983).
 7. *Ned Myers* is one of Cooper's least known works. There have been thirteen different reprints and editions since it first appeared in 1843. Most of these were published before 1860. There is a French edition (1844) and a German edition (1862). The reprint (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989) uses the text of the last to appear, that of G. P. Putnam's Sons, Knickerbocker Press, 1899. Many "complete" editions of Cooper's works did not include *Ned Myers*. In recent years, literary scholars have been reevaluating Cooper and writers of his generation. In the process, *Ned Myers* has become better known among literary scholars, to the benefit of maritime historians.
 8. James Fenimore Cooper, *The History of the Navy of the United States*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1839; republished by Literature House, Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1970), 2:262.
 9. Kverndal, *Seaman's Missions*, 518-519.
 10. Harold D. Langley, *Social Reform in the United States Navy, 1798-1862* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1967).
 11. Philbrick, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 117-120; Egan, "Gentlemen-Sailors," 137-140, 177-178.
 12. Egan, "Gentlemen-Sailors," 158 ff.
 13. Egan, "Gentlemen-Sailors," 162.
 14. Egan, "Gentlemen-Sailors," 155.



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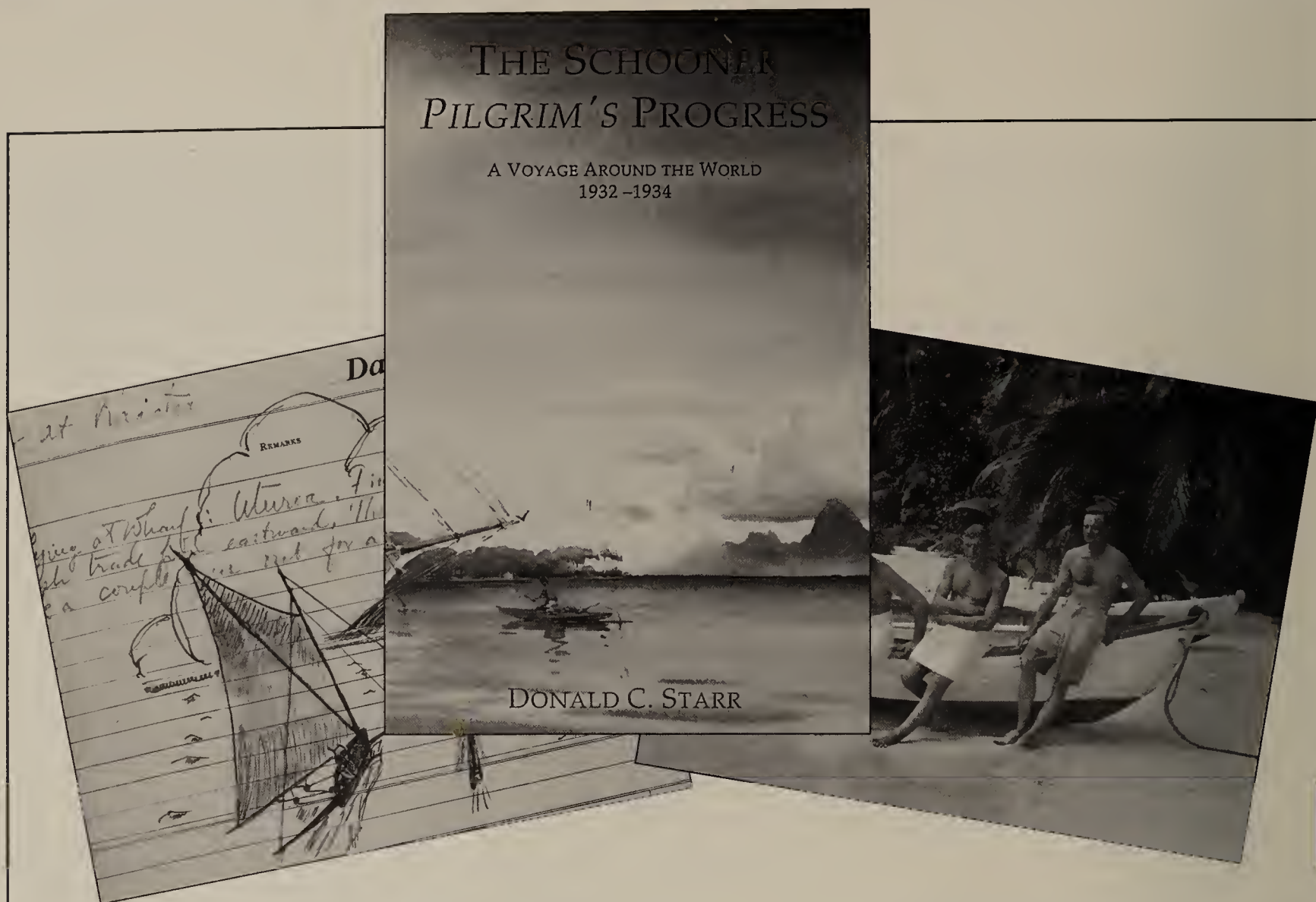


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Nelson Resartus: Legitimate Order in Cooper's Fleet Novel

ROBERT D. MADISON

The beginning of the year 1842 was a busy one for James Fenimore Cooper. He had published *The Deerslayer* in the autumn of the preceding year, the last of the Leatherstocking Tales and a work that would be acknowledged by future readers as a giant in American Literature. At the same time that he had been at work on *The Deerslayer*, he had also been revising and abridging his two-volume *History of the Navy of the United States of America* (1839, revised in 1840) for use as a text by midshipmen and apprentices. Cooper was, in his own eyes, as much a naval historian as he was a novelist — perhaps even more, as the evidence of the 1840s suggests.

Cooper had given up novel writing in the thirties, turning instead to strict social criticism of Europe and America and, increasingly, to naval affairs.¹ He had, in fact, prepared to write naval history for all his literary life. When he turned to naval materials for *The Two Admirals: A Tale* late in 1841, he was not simply experimenting with form.² He was using material in which he had immersed himself for over a decade, and which in 1842 would produce (in terms of naval non-fiction) the biographies of three American naval officers (Somers, Bainbridge, and Dale) and a treatise on the British naval historian William James. This last provided him with the themes of fleets and admirals; the young United States had little experience with the former, and the latter would not appear in America for over twenty years.

The Two Admirals began at first as a book

about fleets; indeed, ships were to be its only characters. That intention was almost entirely abandoned.³ Instead, Cooper turned to naval character and his central portrait of the relationship between two differently-tempered admirals.⁴ Oddly enough, Cooper, who had long been a proponent of the formation of the rank of admiral in the United States, did not develop this polemical theme in the novel. Instead, he probed deeply into what has been referred to in Navy education circles today as "the loyalty thing."

The Two Admirals chronicles the apoplexy and death of an English baronet in 1745, and explores the legitimacy of his heirs' claims to wealth and title, alongside an exploration of the legitimacy of the Stuart claim to the throne of England. The first chapter's long discussion of the law of the half blood — patently based on the discussion of Salic Law that opens *Henry V* — prepares us for the issue. The outcome of the first half of the book — a justification of the workings of the peerage and legitimate claims through law — moves us far beyond the question of legitimacy. We move into the second half of the book — the "sea novel" half — and are presented with Admiral Richard Bluewater's dilemma: a choice between a legitimacy he believes (and to which Cooper forces us to accede, however reluctantly) is true, and loyalty to Sir Gervaise Oakes, his commander and deepest friend.

The basis of this relationship, and many of the minor aspects of plot, is drawn (as Richard H. Ballinger pointed out long ago) from Robert

Southey's *Life of Nelson* and the correspondence of Nelson's close friend Collingwood.⁵ Cooper's debt to his own *History of the Navy*, also suggested by Ballinger, is certainly insignificant, however, compared to what Cooper immersed himself in while responding to the *Edinburgh Review*'s acclamation for Captain Chamier's edition of William James' *The Naval History of Great Britain* (1837).⁶

This impressive sideshow of 1842 is the key to understanding Cooper's sources in this book. Cooper's *Democratic Review* essay about William James focuses (as did his knowledge) on the conflict between England and the United States, but *The Two Admirals* draws on the full range of British naval history, is set well before open hostilities between England and the colonies, and bears no biographical relationship to either Collingwood or Nelson, despite the plundering of works specifically by and about them.

In fact, Sir Gervaise Oakes, the commanding admiral, is patently based not on the close relationship between Nelson and Hardy or Collingwood, but on John Jervis, Earl St. Vincent. Jervis had been Nelson's mentor and sponsor; nevertheless, Nelson broke with him, as described by Robert Southey in *The Life of Nelson*:

*Then came the victory at Copenhagen: which Nelson truly called, the most difficult achievement, the hardest fought battle, the most glorious result, that ever graced the annals of our country. He, of course, expected the medal: and, in writing to Earl St. Vincent, said: "He longed to have it, and would not give it up to be made an English duke." The medal, however, was not given: — "For what reason," said Nelson, "Lord St. Vincent best knows." — Words plainly implying a suspicion, that it was withheld by some feeling of jealousy; and that suspicion estranged him, during the remaining part of his life, from one who had at one time been, essentially, as well as sincerely, his friend...*⁷

In a book that dwells on the possibility of disloyalty, one also suspects the ever-present

influence of the Perry-Elliott controversy as well. The key action of the book — Bluewater's hesitation and then succor of his friend — matches the Lake Erie relationship much more closely. Nelson, on the other hand, never hesitated. One could thus recognize three strands in the naval portion of the book: the Nelson strand, bringing with it obvious names of subordinates and the major fleet maneuvers; the Jervis strand, focussing on the Admiral of Cooper's choice who best represented the impeccable tradition of British command at sea; and the Elliott strand, of fraternity gone wrong.⁸

The theme does, in fact, come from the intersection of the Nelson and Jervis strands, but they are twisted. The chief end of service in the naval world of *The Two Admirals* is gaining a peerage: becoming part of the established, the legitimate, unassailable order of things. "When your work is done," exclaims Sir Gervaise to subordinate Captain Parker, "make the best of your way to the nearest English port, and clap a Scotchman on your shoulder to keep the king's sword from chafing it. They thought me fit for a knighthood at three and twenty, and the deuce is in it, Parker, if you are not worthy of it, at three and sixty." "You will be made Viscount Bowldero, for these last affairs," a wounded Bluewater advises his friend Sir Gervaise; "Nor do I see, why you should again refuse a peerage." Not only is naval promotion secondary glory to these fictional characters, there is also a long subtext centered on a young officer whose social rank — he is Lord Geoffrey — gives him privilege among his seniors afloat. And it is Lord Geoffrey who, at the very close of the novel, provides continuity at a time when an old Sir Gervaise is unable to remember the friendship, loyalty, or even name of his subordinate, Richard Bluewater: "The gentleman is now at the tomb of his dearest friend," Lord Geoffrey observes, "and yet, as you see, he appears to have lost all recollection that such a person ever existed."

The Two Admirals is not history. It is neither the historic relationship between Nelson and his associates nor, except as sheer fantasy, is it the

relationship between Cooper and his best friend, William Branford Shubrick, prophetic as that name may be for American admirals. Cooper's book is more nearly a Shakespearean comedy, consciously clinging to the unities of time and place. It is dark comedy, concluded by a marriage that does nothing to resolve the themes of loyalty and legitimacy that have been tested afloat and ashore. The generosity of Sir Gervaise extends to recognize the justice of a young applicant's claim to a baronetcy, but not the Stuart Pretender's claim to the throne. Ashore, law is paramount. Afloat, issues of legitimate command and obedience, while unclouded, are resolved only through the mechanism of personal loyalty. Bluewater's crisis is not so much one of loyalty as recognizing the conflict of these principles — and opting for the immediate "right" of friendship.

Had this book been written a year later, no doubt we would speculate about the Gansevoort/Mackenzie relationship as a source for Bluewater's dilemma. But *The Two Admirals* was published in early spring, 1842, and Cooper went right to work on *The Wing-and-Wing*, perhaps his most mature romance of the sea.⁹ In it, Nelson appears as a major character in a major

episode that plays out the historical drama of the Carraccioli hanging, the darkest blot on Nelson's career. Cooper, after all, saw Nelson as a highly questionable — if *de facto* — role model for the rising American navy. *The Wing-and-Wing* came out in November of 1842, just as the next chapter in Cooper's life as a naval historian was beginning, not far to the east of the Lesser Antilles, in a brig named the *Somers*.¹⁰



Robert Durwood Madison attended the University of Rhode Island, Clark University, and Northwestern University (Ph.D. 1981), and specializes in nineteenth century American literature. He has edited works of Southey, Cooper, and Melville, as well as the forthcoming Penguin edition of Thomas Wentworth Higginson's *Army Life in the Black Regiment*. He is Professor of English at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

Notes

1. See my introduction to the abridged *History of the Navy* (Delmar: 1988) for a fuller analysis of the earlier naval writings.
2. For a complete discussion of Cooper's proposal for a novel with no human characters, only ships, see Don Ringe's introduction to the State University of New York edition of *The Two Admirals* (Albany: 1990). Cooper's intention may also have been sublimated in his unfinished "biography" of the USS *Constitution*, a long essay which he had intended to publish alongside his human biographies in *Lives of Distinguished American Naval Officers* (1846).
3. Tom Clancy's *Hunt for Red October* is largely written in this form, with tremendous success. Cooper's publisher, a hundred and forty years earlier, balked.
4. One might cynically say these admirals are the Effinghams *redivivi*. One is a tactician, the other a seaman; one is *laissez-faire*, the other a micromanager; one loyal to the house of Stuart, the other loyal to the

house of Hanover. Cooper enjoyed working with doubles.

5. "Origins of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Two Admirals*," *American Literature* 20 (1948), 20–30.
6. Cooper's essay "The Edinburgh Review on James's Naval Occurrences and Cooper's Naval History" appeared in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 10 (1842), 411–435, 515–541. James was essentially "doubled" by Cooper's piece and the unsigned *New York Review* article of early 1842, an essay that depended extensively on Cooper's own *History of the Navy* (1840):

The recent appearance of a new edition of James's Naval History of Great Britain, repeating all the former misrepresentations in his narrative of events connected with our country, seems to us to offer a fit occasion for examining its

claims to the authenticity of history; and in doing this, we shall find no difficulty, we think, in convincing the writer not only of a uniform violation of truth in his record of everything that concerns ourselves, but also of such malignity of spirit as must disqualify him for his office, and destroy his credibility as a historian. ("James's Naval History of Great Britain," *New York Review*, 10 [January 1842], 184) The new edition was edited by Captain Chamier, RN.

Neither Cooper's piece nor the *New York Review* essay handles James particularly delicately.

7. *The Life of Nelson* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), 240-241.
8. Such contributions include the lessons of the Nile (388), "Kiss me, Oakes" (442), anticipations of Nelson's flagship, the *Victory* (357), the duty of an Englishman to hate a Frenchman (181), Nelson's idea of the proper place being alongside the enemy (254), and the names of Parker and Foley (and probably others, including the similarity of Vervillin and Villeneuve). One ought probably to look at Southey's *Lives of the British Admirals*, not only for their contribution to Cooper's naval lore but also as models for Cooper's own *Lives of Distinguished American Naval Officers* (published with this title in 1846). The idea of ducking a shot (336) comes directly from the Perry/Elliott controversy. The horrid and ironic anticipation

of the *Somers* hangings (341, 354) may indicate, along with A. S. Mackenzie's description of a hanging in *A Year in Spain* and Cooper's own description of the hanging in *The Wing-and-Wing*, a morbid fascination for hanging prevalent among antebellum naval officers.

9. *The Two Admirals* turned out to be a surprisingly popular work: it was reprinted two-volumes-in-one by Lea and Blanchard in 1843, by Burgess and Stringer in 1845, and possibly by Stringer and Townsend in 1848 (in addition to the printings mentioned in Ringe's introduction). Near the turn of the century, *The Two Admirals* was published as part of a British six-volume set of sea tales which included Cupples' *The Green Hand*, Marryat's *Midshipman Easy*, M. Scott's *Tom Cringle's Log*, Russell's *The Wreck of the Grosvenor*, and, remarkably, Melville's *Moby-Dick*. The inclusion of this work out of all of Cooper's maritime romances indicates the higher esteem in which the work was held in the land of its setting and main characters.
10. Cooper's vitriolic response to the *Somers* affair found expression in *The Battle of Lake Erie* (1843), *Ned Myers; or, A Life Before the Mast* (1843), and, exhaustively, in "Review of the Proceedings of the Naval Court Martial" (1844) (Delmar: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, State University of New York Press). His general antipathy to Alexander Slidell Mackenzie, whom Cooper must have regarded as a literary rival second only to the late Sir Walter Scott, found utterance in virtually all of his naval writings after 1839. But that's another — and another's — story.



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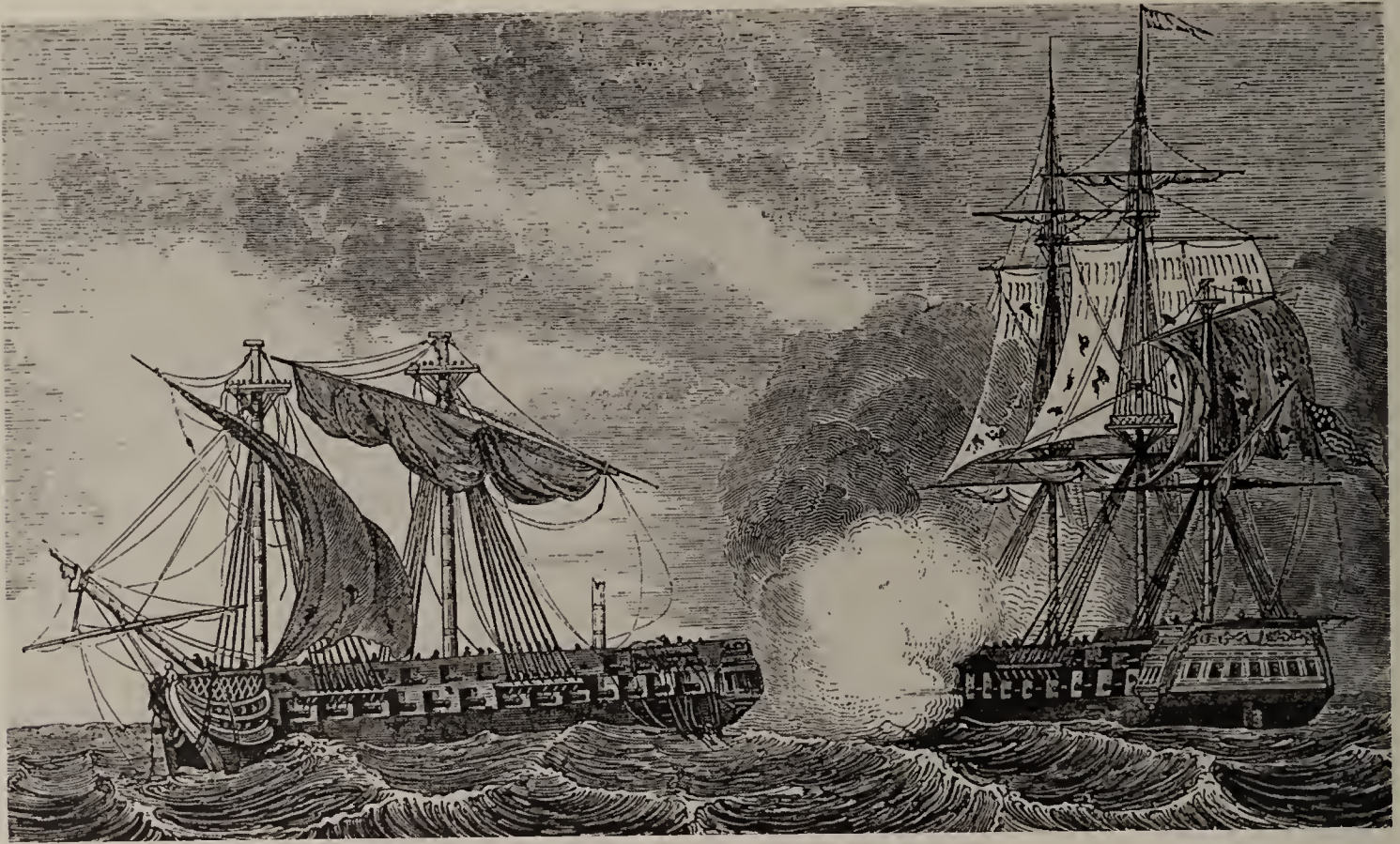
Hornet sinking the *Peacock*.



Wasp and Frolic.



Peacock and L'epervier.



United States and Macedonia.

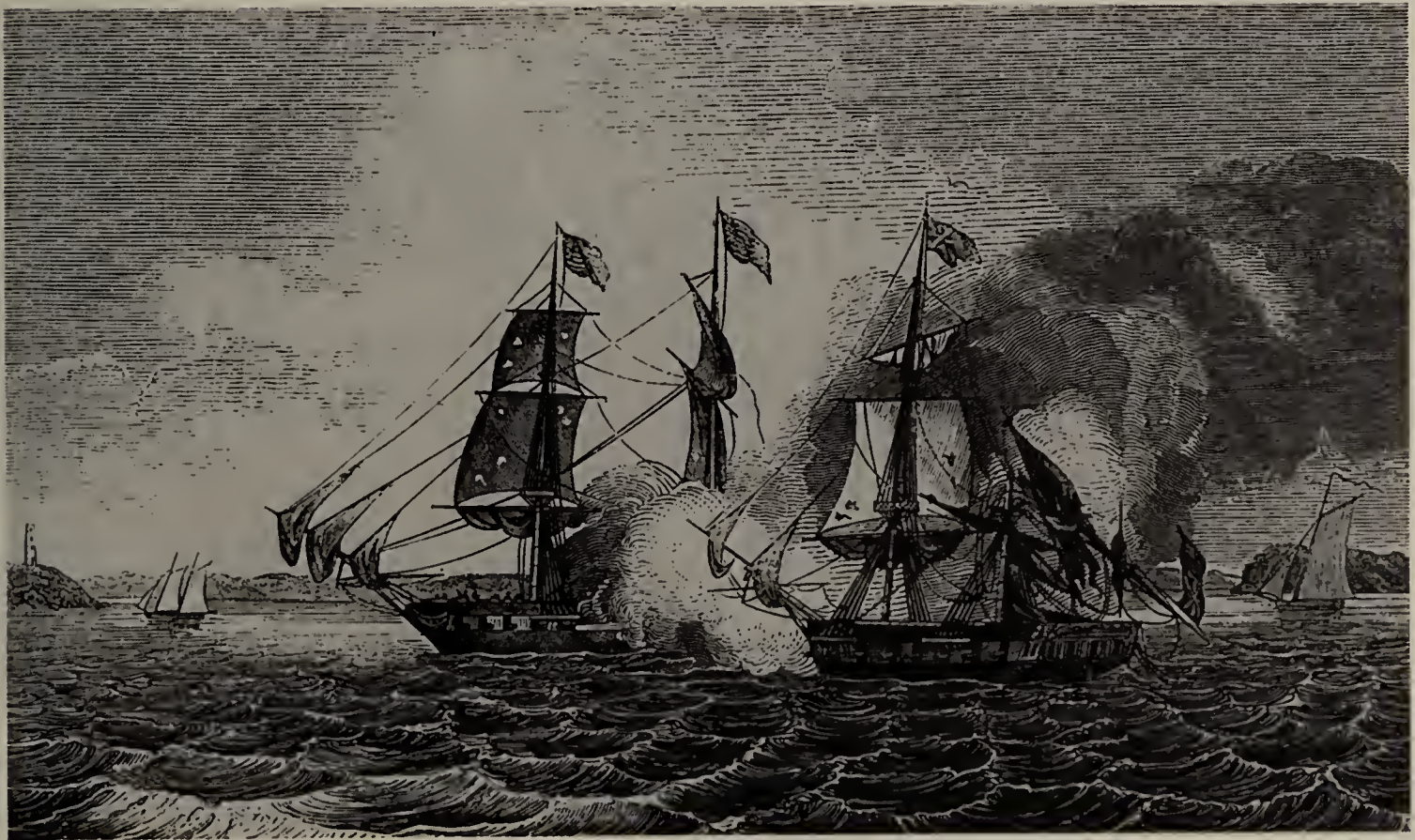


Capture of the Essex.

The American Neptune



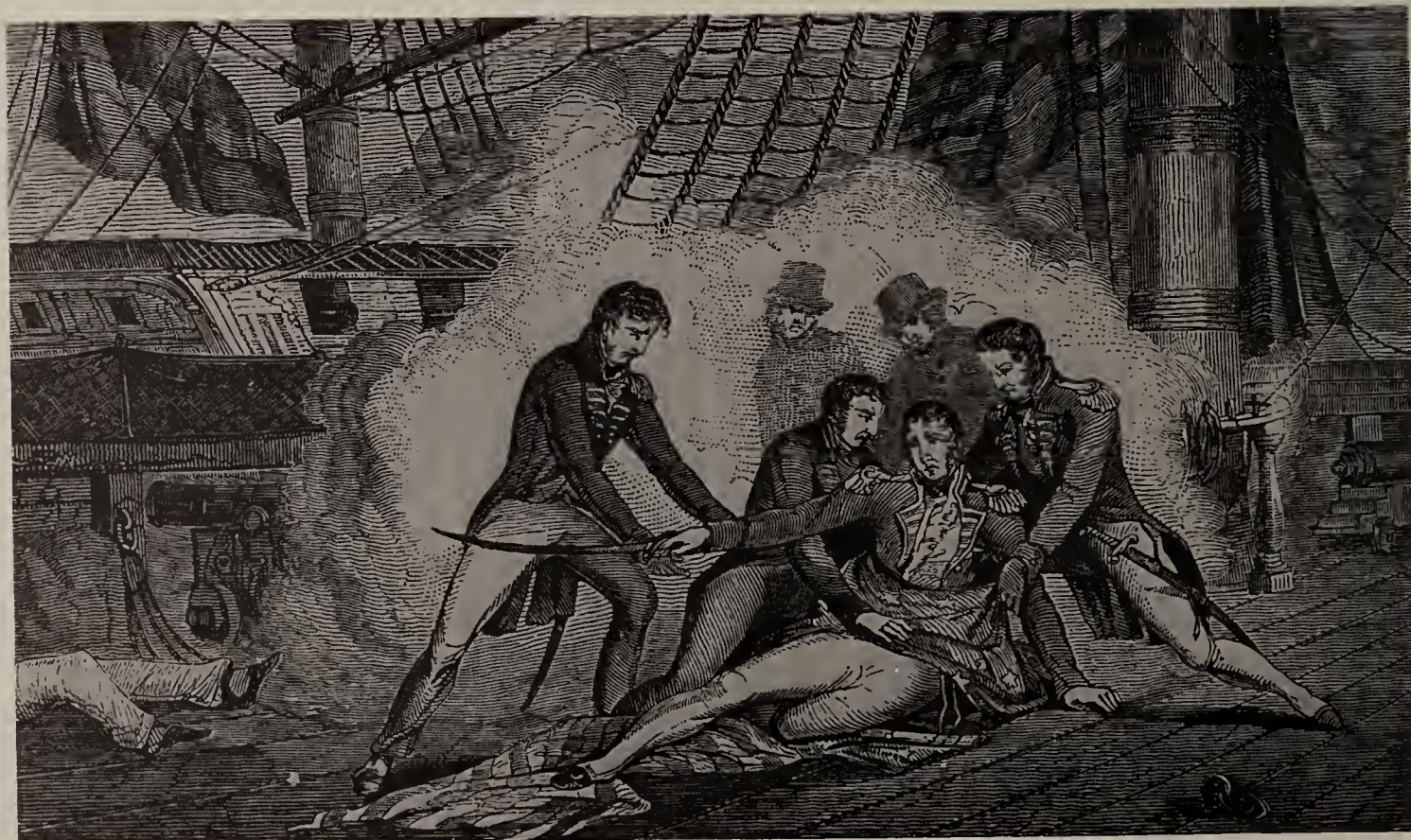
Battle of Lake Erie.



Enterprise and Boxer.



Battle of Lake Champlain.



Death of Lawrence.



Constitution, Cyane and Levant.

A Cooper Gallery

The twelve illustrations above are taken from James Fenimore Cooper's book, *History of the Navy of the United States*. In the original publication, all illustrations included the surrounding embellishments that are shown on the first illustration of this printing. It was considered more clear to print the action illustrations without the surrounds in this issue.

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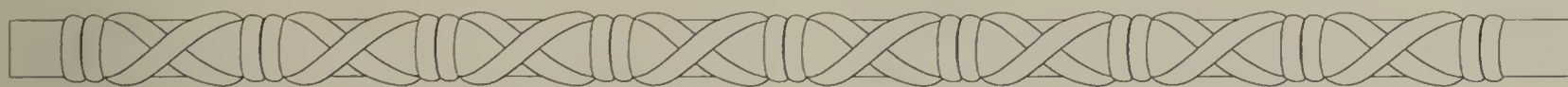
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Enabling and Disabling the Lake Erie Discussion:

James Fenimore Cooper and Alexander Slidell Mackenzie
Respond to the Perry/Elliott Controversy

HUGH EGAN

At half past two, the wind springing up, Captain Elliott was enabled to bring his vessel, the Niagara, gallantly into close action. I immediately went on board of her, when he anticipated my wishes, by volunteering to bring the schooners, which had been kept astern by the lightness of the wind, into closer action.¹

This extract is taken from Oliver Hazard Perry's "after action" report to the Secretary of the Navy, 13 September 1813. It concerns a crucial juncture in the Battle of Lake Erie three days earlier, during which Perry's squadron had captured the British squadron under the command of Robert Heriot Barclay. That one word, "enabled," perhaps hinting at a distinction between the ability to act and action itself, has disabled historical discourse on this matter, and goes to the heart of a controversy involving the performance of Captain Jesse D. Elliott during battle, the interpretation of that performance by Captain Perry, and the analysis of Captain Perry's interpretation by second generation commentators James Fenimore Cooper and Alexander Slidell Mackenzie.

Beginning with Perry's report — which has been alternately termed sincere or strategic — the battle of Lake Erie has generated such a voluminous and rarified textual response that a

naval controversy begins increasingly to resemble a literary controversy. The affair has raised questions, for instance, about the elusive relationship between deed and document, about what constitutes appropriate evidence for an "objective" account of history, about author intention, textual ambiguity, and rhetorical strategy. The overlap of the military with the literary is all but inevitable, perhaps, given the participation in this affair of Cooper and Mackenzie. They both had careers which spanned naval and authorial ambition, and which crossed at a number of historical flash points. At the very center of the issues, Perry's text serves as a sign of how opaque and resistant are those very accounts of the affair which was purported to be the most straightforward.

The circumstances of the battle are now the stuff of legend. With his own flagship *Lawrence* battered and crippled, Perry transferred his pennant by boat to the *Niagara*. He took over command of that vessel from Jesse D. Elliott, revived the American effort, divided the British squadron, and in fairly short order overwhelmed the two main British vessels, the *Detroit* and the *Queen Charlotte*. Shortly after the battle, Perry wrote his famous message to Major-General William Henry Harrison, "We have met the enemy — and they are ours."²

The victory at Lake Erie straddles any number of paradoxes — such as the fact that Perry,

after inspiring his crew never to give up the ship, did exactly that — but a whole series of historical ironies swirl around Perry's second in command, Jesse Elliott, for whom victory constituted a kind of professional defeat.³ In the course of the three-hour battle, Elliott, commanding a vessel identical with Perry's, stayed largely out of the action for two-and-half hours, while the *Lawrence* was enduring heavy attack. He engaged in some distant fire with the British squadron, but never came to the direct aid of the *Lawrence*. Elliott claimed that the lightness of the wind kept him away and that, in addition, he did not want to break the line of battle established by Perry. After the conflict, however, both British and American seamen questioned Elliott's courage for avoiding the heavy fighting for as long as he did. The American resentment was spurred by the fact that the *Lawrence* had twenty-two men and officers killed, while the *Niagara* had only two.

It is in this context that we read Perry's after-action report, in which he officially praises Elliott, by saying that at a certain point Elliott was "enabled" to engage his vessel in close action with the enemy. The unanswered question is: did he do so? Perry states further:

*Of Captain Elliott, already so well known to the government, it would be almost superfluous to speak. In this action he evinced his characteristic bravery and judgment; and, since the close of the action, has given me the most able and essential assistance.*⁴

The naval bureaucracy followed suit with its own official praise of Elliott's conduct, even in the face of persistent rumors that condemned it. Newspaper accounts from England, reporting on the court of inquiry assembled to assess the performance of British commander Barclay, described Elliott as "making away" during the height of battle. In response to these allegations, Elliott demanded that an American Court of Inquiry clear his name, and this was done in April, 1815.⁵

Here the matter rested until 1818, when Perry himself instituted court-martial charges

against Elliott — both for his conduct during the battle and for his post-battle "intrigues" against Perry. Perry claims that his initial words of praise for Elliott were written in the interest of maintaining naval harmony after a great victory and screening Elliott from censure.⁶ On the other hand, it was Perry's feeling that Elliott's conduct since the battle — in expressing public and covert resentment over Perry's exalted status — could no longer be met with silence or praise. Perry's charges were never officially examined or prosecuted. He was dead within a year, and perhaps the accusations seemed irrelevant as a result. At any rate, the circumstances of their withdrawal remain unresolved.⁷

The affair lay largely dormant for nearly twenty more years, although in the meantime Elliott managed to offend the Whig press on a number of political matters (he was a notorious Jacksonian) and each time would stir up the accusations of his cowardice during the Battle of Lake Erie.⁸ James Fenimore Cooper then published his *History of the Navy* in two volumes in 1839. His account of the Lake Erie affair attempts painstakingly to avoid controversy, and follows the official line of praise for all concerned. He simply noted the transfer of power on the *Niagara* from one commander to another, and summarized in this fashion:

*The personal deportment of Captain Perry, throughout the day, was worthy of all praise. He did not quit his own vessel when she became useless, to retire from the battle, but to gain it; an end that was fully obtained, and an effort which resulted in triumph.... For his conduct in this battle, Captain Perry received a gold medal from Congress. Captain Elliott also received a gold medal.*⁹

Cooper included in his history Perry's praise for Elliott, but does not mention that Perry withdrew that praise and filed court-martial charges five years later.

In attempting to avoid controversy, Cooper created it. He, too, was accused of "making

away" from close action on this issue. In quick order there appeared three different condemnations of his account — authored by William Duer, Tristram Burges, and Alexander Mackenzie.¹⁰ In each instance, Cooper proved immensely resistant to criticism. He went as far as to prosecute the publisher of Duer's review for libel, earning a judgment of \$300. The Burges review, in turn, is perhaps best known for focusing upon that word "enabled" and seeing it as an equivocation on Perry's part. Perry's camp was called upon to answer the question: why did the commander first praise Elliott and then, five years later, turn on him? Burges says that the praise wasn't really praise at all:

Here he saved Elliott by a benevolent ambiguity. He says 'at half past two, the wind springing up, Captain Elliott was ENABLED to bring his vessel, the Niagara, gallantly into close action.' He was ENABLED, he could say; he could not say he DID bring the Niagara into close action."¹¹

A literary critic looking for signs of rhetorical hesitation or ambiguity in a text will almost certainly find them, and it appears that here Burges has wilfully taken on that task. By magnifying a single word, he creates a stereoscopic view of Perry-as-warrior and Perry-as-author. His argument appears precious and overwrought, born of loyalty and defensiveness rather than a "search for truth," but once introduced it is difficult to dispense with. In fact, if read as a strategic exercise, Perry's report gives one plenty to work with. In addition to his use of "enabled," he praises Elliott first by claiming it is superfluous to speak of him, then by saying Elliott "evinced his characteristic bravery and judgment" (characteristically limited?), and finally by thanking him for able and essential assistance "since the close of the action" (hinting, perhaps, that he didn't render such assistance during the action).

Opened to this kind of analysis, Perry's official account, whose purpose was to give "the most important particulars of the action," is no longer the sincere, reflective narrative of an

American hero, one whose motive was simply to match words to actions, but something more self-conscious and cagy, the beginning of a different kind of battle altogether. His report is but the first sign that, as the actual events of 1813 recede, deeds and texts begin to dissolve into one another, with texts becoming deeds, and the straightforwardness of a military victory remaking itself as a meditation on the nature of authorship and the control of historical discourse. In the Lake Erie affair, the thunder of canister would give way to the thunder of criticism and interpretation, with each succeeding layer of commentary received by the opponent as a blow which demanded equal response. As the battle moved into the realm of interpretation, the effects of these volleys could not be measured in terms of victory, defeat, or statistical tables of the wounded and dead. The rhetorical firepower, in fact, often undermines the very cause it seeks to serve.

Of all the reviews published, none struck home more deeply with Cooper, and none framed the issues of history and authorship more acutely, than those of Alexander Slidell Mackenzie. Mackenzie was related by marriage to the Perry clan and was, like Cooper himself, something of a sailor-author. Cooper had served three years in the Navy (1808–1811), stationed on Lake Ontario; Mackenzie was a career Navy man who rose to the rank of captain. Both had published travel books on England in the 1830s, and both had published lead articles in the short-lived *Naval Magazine* in 1836 and 1837. They were, in a sense, literary competitors. In a letter to his wife in 1836, Cooper compared the sales of his own *Sketches of Switzerland* (1836) with Mackenzie's *Spain Revisited* (1836): "The Sketches have not sold very well, but stand very fair. About twice as many have sold as of Slidell's book, but they are puffing away at him, might and main."¹² A year later, the British *Quarterly Review* compared Cooper's irascible *England* (1837) unfavorably to Mackenzie's *The American in England* (1835):

...no one complains of Captain Slidell's

*book — because it is written in good faith, and with good manners. His views, when erroneous, are not distorted either by vanity or malice; and hitting, as he does, much harder, and on sorer places than Mr. Cooper, his strictures may be read by an Englishman sometimes with profit — often with regret — but never with anything like the mingled disgust and contempt which are excited by the rancorous triviality of Mr. Cooper.*¹³

Fanatically loyal to Perry, Mackenzie first commented on *Naval History* in the *North American Review* of October 1839. He himself engages in some equivocal praise at the beginning:

*Mr. Cooper has made a valuable addition to the history of the country, in the work before us. He appears to have used a commendable diligence in searching out whatever facts our early history affords, illustrative of the origin and growth of the national navy, and has dressed them out in a form as attractive, perhaps, as the unconnected nature of the events, and the meagreness of the annals from which he derived his materials, permitted.*¹⁴

Soon, however, Mackenzie is into the battle of Lake Erie, accusing Cooper of tarnishing Perry's reputation by refusing to criticize Elliott, and by presenting "gross misrepresentations" of the battle itself. Twelve pages of the 35-page review are devoted to correcting Cooper's rendition of Lake Erie.

Mackenzie's review put in motion a widening spiral of charge and counter-charge between the two authors, with name-calling escalating and pages increasing in every exchange. In his *Life of Perry* (1840), a biography written largely to refute Cooper's history, Mackenzie embraces Burges' view that the word "enabled" is an equivocation, explaining:

He leaves to Captain Elliott the benefit of the inference that, more than two hours after the Lawrence had been in

*close action, he actually did what he was enabled to do; which, by concurrent testimony of the officers of the squadron, except a few of those on the Niagara, he never did.*¹⁵

In his post-battle report, according to Mackenzie, Perry "was torturing his ingenuity to keep honestly out of view the palpable misconduct of Captain Elliott."¹⁶

Because some of the material issues relating to Lake Erie were a matter for litigation in his suit against the publisher of William Duer's article, Cooper could not respond fully until 1843, when he published a hundred-page pamphlet, *The Battle of Lake Erie, Or Answers to Messrs. Duer, Burges, and Mackenzie*. Indeed, part of this story involved Cooper's continual promise throughout 1841 and 1842 to "do up" the whole Lake Erie matter in a form which could not be refuted.¹⁷ When he did finally respond, he opened as an avenging angel, sounding a note of biblical portentousness:

*The writer has not sought this discussion. It has been forced on him by his assailants, who must now face the consequences. For years the writer has submitted in comparative silence to gross injustice, in connection with this matter, not from any want of confidence in the justice of his case or any ability to defend himself, but, because he 'bided his time,' knowing, when that day should arrive, he had truth to fall back upon.... The day of reckoning has come at length, and the judgment of men will infallibly follow.*¹⁸

Central to Cooper's attack is his impatience with the notion that Perry would "meditate any evasion" in his official report. He ridicules the idea of any "benevolent ambiguity" on Perry's part:

In this section of the country, we have a good many 'benevolent ambiguities'

*practiced by a certain caste of lawyers... Among gentlemen, every where, the benevolence would meet with but little respect, while the 'ambiguity' would excite disgust.*¹⁹

As Cooper works through the layered nature of his refutation, however, he too begins to sound like a textual critic, examining specific word choice and weighing author intention. Focusing upon Perry's phrase, "I immediately went on board of her" (in the sentence which follows the "enabled" passage) Cooper says:

*Here we see Capt. Perry expressly referring to this change of position, this coming into close action...as giving him (Perry) an opportunity of making the change of vessel of which he speaks. The use of the word 'immediately,' too, shows this. It refers to time, of course; and to what time can Mr. Burges apply it, if it be not immediately after Capt. Elliot got 'into close action.' Does he think Perry would have said 'immediately after Capt. Elliott was ENABLED to get into close action, I went on board the Niagara?' This would have been a very complicated falsifying of the truth. Perry's language had no such object; it is simple, direct, and not to be misunderstood.*²⁰

The complexity of Cooper's analysis has the paradoxical effect of undermining the straightforwardness of his final statement. Cooper noted that Perry used the word "enabled" at another point in his official report, where it was "unequivocally used in direct connection with performance, and without any 'benevolent ambiguity.'" But again, the more Cooper assigned deliberate strategy to Perry's choice of specific words, the further he entered the realm of rhetorical instability and conceived of the battle as a text rather than an event. One might even read a tortured ingenuity into Cooper's historical summary: "For his conduct in battle, Captain Perry received a gold medal from Congress. Captain Elliott also received a gold

medal." An implicit question — why did Elliott receive a medal? — is left unanswered. To the extent that his account engages in its own evasions, and that the very making of textual narrative invites this slipperiness, Cooper himself was guilty of the duplicity he found so impossible in Perry.

Still, Cooper pronounced, here and elsewhere in his writings from this period, a blunt philosophical positivism whereby facts should precede and determine opinions in a republic, and the corruption in the Perry case (and in America at large) is that these poles have been reversed. Opinions about Elliott's misconduct were, according to Cooper, "clearly in an unfit state to be received at all into the pages of history."²¹

Left unexamined, of course, is how the "pages of history" help to create the very events they receive. Cooper was clearly uncomfortable with the fragmentary, fluid, and irresolute path of historical truth as it makes its way into written accounts. In his pamphlet, some rather delicate textual exegeses on the positions of the vessels, the relative strengths of the British and American forces, the number of seamen dead or wounded — all of which respond to points of Mackenzie's — are weirdly combined with an *ad hominem* passion that all but overwhelms his scholarship. At times, Cooper's own fixed opinions determined his facts. The precision of the analysis often appears to have no historical purpose at all. Rather, framed by his own sense of outrage and irritation, Cooper's meticulous dissection of events illustrated his dilemma rather eloquently. He wished to demonstrate that the events of Lake Erie simply happened, and thereby fall outside any need for interpretation, but became increasingly implicated in the textual strategies he sought to discredit, including the ratcheting-up of condemnatory rhetoric. At one point he wrote: "I hope those persons who are ready to canonize Capt. Mackenzie as a saint, without waiting the customary century, will bear this whole matter in mind."²²

The exchanges between Cooper and Mackenzie endured over four years, with their polemics

spanning a variety of textual genres, including history, biography, essay, and review. Of course, these men were employed in other arenas during this time, Cooper as a novelist and Mackenzie as a naval captain. During the four-year span of controversy over Lake Erie, Cooper published eight novels, including *The Pathfinder* (1840), *The Deerslayer* (1841), and a number of sea novels. Mackenzie was involved in his own controversy when he hanged three men at sea aboard the *Somers* in December 1842. The men were suspected of mutiny, although no overt act of mutiny ever occurred, no trial was held to determine the truth of the accusation, and no chance given the accused to refute the charges against them. Mackenzie was tried for murder and other charges in a naval court; he was acquitted on all counts.

In fact, the *Somers* affair occurred just as Cooper was writing his Lake Erie pamphlet, and he could not resist adding references to the "mutiny" to his rhetorical arsenal. Speaking of how Elliott's reputation has been damaged by Mackenzie, Cooper wrote: "Let it be imagined, for a moment, that he had assumed the responsibility of executing three men without a trial, and then fancy the result! His life, justly or unjustly, would have been the forfeit."²³ There are more oblique references as well, such as when Cooper describes Mackenzie's character:

I think Captain Mackenzie's mind to be very singularly constituted, and that he did not mean all he has so clearly said. So many instances of this peculiarity of moral conformation have forced themselves on my notice, as to leave no doubt of its existence. Capt. Mackenzie can see only one side of a question. He is a man of prejudice and denunciation, and he accuses, less under evidence, than under convictions. Were he inspired, this last might do well enough; but, as he is only a man, and quite often wrong as right, fearful consequences have followed from his mistakes.²⁴

At this point, Cooper appears to have moved from the historical events of Lake Erie to the

more personal and less winnable battle of character assassination. In so doing, he left himself vulnerable to the very charge he leveled at Mackenzie: that he was a man of prejudice and denunciation.

Cooper would write an eighty-page "elaborate review" of Mackenzie's court-martial trial, condemning once again the Emersonian tendency of the captain to "regard things as he has at first conceived them to be, and act under his conviction, rather than under the authority of evidence."²⁵ The *Somers* case, even more than the Lake Erie affair, inhered so fully in the complexities of language — in codes, handwriting, dictation, translation; in Mackenzie's own stylistic affectations in his written account of the incident; in contemporary sea fiction (including Cooper's own) which was said to have corrupted one of the conspirators; in literary grudges and literary fame — that the whole incident seems to issue from, as well as proceed into, written documents.²⁶ Cooper's review of Mackenzie's court-martial trial is, in its own right, an interesting and conflicted attempt to separate deeds from texts, facts from interpretation. In the *Somers* affair, this was simply impossible.

On the subject of Lake Erie, at least, Cooper began with the clarity of a victory at sea. The capture of six British vessels was not open to dispute, the facts were recorded and acclaimed, and they had, in this sense, the authority of evidence. Cooper assumed that the results of his textual assault would be similarly obvious. In a letter to Elliott, Cooper promised that Mackenzie "will be demolished." He later claimed that his Lake Erie pamphlet had "struck deep wherever it has been read," and that "Poor McKenzie is losing ground daily."²⁷ In the same drive for closure, some reviewers celebrated Cooper's Lake Erie pamphlet as the last word on the subject. One wrote in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*:

The controversy may now be considered at an end. Mr. Cooper has performed an operation analogous to that of the Niag-

ara in the battle itself. He has not come into "close action" till rather late in the day, perhaps, but after he has once fairly entered the enemy's line, scarce more than a single broadside of his heavy metal has been necessary to settle the question.²⁸

Even this amusing conceit has its own paradox and loose end, demonstrating again that the battle cannot move from history to text in anything resembling a direct path. Cooper, the champion of Jesse Elliott, is metaphorically put in the position of Oliver Hazard Perry as he destroys the opposition. Cooper's pamphlet was not the last word, of course. In 1844, the embattled Mackenzie came out with a new edition of the *Life of Perry*, which contained a 57-page appendix responding to Cooper.²⁹ Here, he took Cooper's seamanship to task, saying it was all right for writing novels, but not for naval his-

tory. Cooper immediately promised another response, but none has been located. No doubt still "enabled," Cooper may have simply decided not to. Beginning with Perry's use of this term, a first sign that the battle had moved from the sea to the page, the authority of evidence in the Lake Erie affair yields increasingly to the predisposition of its interpreter.



Hugh Egan is the Associate Professor of English and Director of the Honors Program at Ithaca College. His research interests focus upon nineteenth century American literature, and he has published on Irving, Dana, and Cooper. He is currently working on a project involving Cooper's mid-career works.

Appendix:

Cooper/Mackenzie Exchanges on the Subject of Lake Erie

May 1839: Cooper's *Naval History* published.

October 1839: Mackenzie's review in the *North American Review*.

1840: Mackenzie's *Life of Perry* published, the purpose of which is to restore the admiration of Perry which Cooper had sought to diminish. Long chapters on Lake Erie directly refute Cooper. Thirty-page appendix contains record of charges Perry brought against Elliott in 1818.

29 March 1841: Cooper's preliminary reply to Mackenzie's review of *Life of Perry* published in *The Evening Post*. Cooper says he cannot reply fully because the Duer suit is still being prosecuted, and some of the facts bear materially on the Mackenzie review.

7 April 1841: Mackenzie's reply to Cooper published in *The Evening Post*.

May/June 1843: Cooper publishes his own brief biography of Perry in *Graham's Magazine*. Fifty-five of the eighty-six pages concern Lake Erie and its aftermath; they respond directly to Mackenzie's criticisms.

July 1843: Cooper responds fully to the Lake Erie affair with a pamphlet, *The Battle of Lake Erie, Or Answers to Messrs. Burges, Duer, and Mackenzie*.

1844: Mackenzie brings out a new edition of his *Life of Perry*, which contains a 57-page appendix devoted to answering Cooper's points from the *Graham's Magazine* biography and *The Battle of Lake Erie* pamphlet.

Notes

1. William S. Dudley, ed., *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1992), 2:557–558.
2. Gerard T. Altoff, "The Battle of Lake Erie: A Narrative," in William Jeffrey Welsh and David Curtis Skaggs, *War on the Great Lakes* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1991), 5–16. For an account that includes maps illustrating the relative positions of the vessels during each half-hour of the battle, see Robert and Thomas Malcomson, *HMS Detroit: The Battle for Lake Erie* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), 94–111.
3. Before battle, Perry raised a flag with James Lawrence's famous words, "Don't give up the ship!" emblazoned on it. Edward L. Beach, *The United States Navy: 200 Years* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 122.
4. *The Naval War of 1812*, 558.
5. David Curtis Skaggs, "Aiming at the Truth: James Fenimore Cooper and the Battle of Lake Erie," *The Journal of Military History* 59 (April 1995), 250.
6. Perry's charges and supporting materials are published in the appendix of Russell Jarvis, *A Biographical Notice of Com. Jesse D. Elliott* (Philadelphia, 1835), 447 ff.
7. Skaggs, "Aiming at the Truth," 248–249.
8. For an account of the strange career of Jesse D. Elliott, see Lawrence J. Friedman and David Curtis Skaggs, "Jesse Duncan Elliott and the Battle of Lake Erie: the Issue of Mental Instability," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 10 (Winter 1990), 493–516.
9. James Fenimore Cooper, *History of the Navy of the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1839), 402–404.
10. Duer's review was published serially in the *New-York Commercial Advertiser* on 8, 11, 14, and 19 June 1839; Tristram Burges, *The Battle of Lake Erie* (Philadelphia: Wm. Marshall & Co., 1839); [Alexander Slidell Mackenzie], *The North American Review* 49 (October 1839), 432–467.
11. Burges, 52.
12. James Franklin Beard, ed., *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960–68), vol. 3, 228.
13. *Quarterly Review*, 59 (October 1837), 329.
14. Mackenzie, *The North American Review*, 432.
15. Mackenzie, *The Life of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1849), 1:275.
16. Mackenzie, *The Life of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry*, 277.
17. Cooper's letter of 29 March 1841 to *The Evening Post*, in which he gives a preliminary response to Mackenzie's *Life of Perry*. *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*, 4:134.
18. Cooper, *The Battle of Lake Erie, Or Answers to Messrs. Burges, Duer, and Mackenzie* (Cooperstown: Phinney, 1843), iii–iv.
19. Cooper, *The Battle of Lake Erie*, 23.
20. Cooper, *The Battle of Lake Erie*, 24.
21. Cooper, *The Battle of Lake Erie*, 35.
22. Cooper, *The Battle of Lake Erie*, 83.
23. Cooper, *The Battle of Lake Erie*, 49.
24. Cooper, *The Battle of Lake Erie*, 58.
25. *Proceedings of the Naval Court-Martial in the Case of Alexander Slidell Mackenzie* (Delmar, NY: Scholars Facsimiles & Reprints, 1992), 279.
26. For my own account of the Somers affair, see the "Introduction" to *Proceedings*.
27. *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*, 4:389, 400–401, 409.
28. Reprinted in *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*, vol. 4, 402.
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Cooper as Passenger

WAYNE FRANKLIN

Scholars interested in the seagoing experience of nineteenth century American writers tend to focus on the time those writers spent as common sailors rather than passengers, perhaps because sailor-authors such as Richard Henry Dana or Herman Melville themselves were somewhat uncomfortable in the latter role. On his crossing to London on the liner *Southampton* in 1849, Melville invested considerable effort proving to his fellow passengers that he really was not just their fellow: hence his “gymnastics” at the masthead, his scoffing at the “nausea noise” that oozed from the staterooms, his eagerness to demonstrate to the sailors that he was one of them, his desire to ride out on the bowsprit after philosophizing with Adler and Taylor (“splendid spectacle,” he noted), and so on.¹ Dana on the *Pilgrim* in the 1830s was always aware of his middle-class origins and labored to conceal them or vacate them by adopting a forecastle perspective. At last, oppressed by the fear that staying longer in California would convert his temporary role before the mast into a permanent fate, Dana used his “connections” in the world of commerce to arrange for a voyage home, thus arousing the suspicions of his fellow sailors that he wasn’t really, for all his hard labor, one of them. Such a sailor was at least partly a passenger, his presence on the vessel being a matter of choice rather than necessity. His voyage was a vacation rather than a mark of vocation.

James Fenimore Cooper preceded Dana and Melville in the forecastle, and in this particular problem as well: as Alan Taylor writes, “In 1806 it was very unusual for a well-educated son of wealth and privilege to assume the hardships,

drudgery, dangers, and low status of a common sailor.”² In such cases we may suspect, with good reason, that the “assumption” of the common sailor’s lot was less than complete, for the articles of what Hugh Egan has called the “gentleman sailor” often contained handy escape clauses.³

Cooper began his voyage on the merchant vessel *Stirling* in 1806–1807 in just such a protected manner. As the reminiscences of the cabin boy Ned Myers, edited by Cooper in 1843, remind us, the sixteen-year-old Cooper was accompanied to the vessel by two grown men, one of them a quarter-owner of the vessel and the consignee of its cargo, unnamed in *Ned Myers* but revealed by a descendant of the captain of the *Stirling* to have been the famous Quaker merchant Jacob Barker, who, Captain Johnston’s descendent stated, was the business associate of William Cooper.⁴ Although neither Alan Taylor’s research nor my own has uncovered evidence of a direct tie between Judge Cooper and Jacob Barker in the voluminous William Cooper papers, apparently something in the Johnston family archives — presently unlocated — indicated the link. However that may be, the Johnstons’ identification of Barker as one of the two merchants that led young Cooper to the *Stirling* in 1806 is certain. James Cooper did not approach the *Stirling* on his own, cap in hand, begging for a chance to sail before the mast in her, but rather was brought on board by men with commercial interests in the voyage.

How did Jacob Barker become involved in helping to arrange for young Cooper’s berth? James had run away from Cooperstown sometime in the early summer of 1806, probably

heading first for New York, where his older brother William Jr. then resided. In mid July William wrote a letter to family friend Richard R. Smith of Philadelphia, informing him of James' flight and alerting him that the young fugitive was on his way to Philadelphia. Smith was a sometime Cooperstown resident and business partner of Judge William Cooper, who owed his appointment as the first sheriff of Otsego County to the judge's influence — and his eventual fame as the model for the authoritarian sheriff Richard Jones in *The Pioneers* to the Judge's youngest son. In 1806, he was being called on to act on behalf of the family's interests in order to resolve the crisis that James' flight from Cooperstown had precipitated.

In reply to the letter from young William Cooper in New York, Smith on 18 July wrote Isaac Cooper, another of the brothers, in Cooperstown, saying that he had that day received William's news and asking what he should do if and when the wayward youth showed up on his doorstep. James must have arrived there almost immediately thereafter, certainly before any answer could arrive from Cooperstown, and spent the next three weeks in the city before heading overland back to New York. While James was in Philadelphia, a letter from Isaac dated 30 July, and containing "the Judge's memorandum" regarding his plight, arrived for Smith. From a letter Smith sent somewhat later, in which he noted that one from Cooperstown had arrived in five days ("a very short time for the Mail to come if you date correctly"),⁵ we can assume that Isaac's 30 July missive arrived perhaps around 5 or 6 August (Smith says it came "in course" — that is, in the ordinary time), just a day or two before James was set to leave. We also may assume that James received his father's "memorandum," either as a document or through Smith's rehearsal of its arguments. From Smith's answer to Isaac, written on 8 August, the morning after James left for New York, it is clear that the Cooper family prior to that time knew of the boy's intention of running off to sea, with an eye to a career in the Navy, which was not mentioned in Smith's first

letter and perhaps had not been divulged in William's unlocated letter of mid-July to Smith.

In writing to Isaac on this second occasion, Smith filled in some details about James' plans. The Judge's memorandum must have contained an armory of arguments to be aimed at the heart and head of the runaway, but Smith, who himself already had sought to dissuade his "young Friend" from going to sea by applying all the arguments he could invent, evidently did not find the new weapons any more convincing. He urged James to consider what hardships lay ahead, and sought to delay him until "some Plan could be arranged with the Judge." Well connected in Philadelphia's business world, Smith also offered to find James a safer slot in "a Counting House" there, as he earlier had done for Isaac. When James persisted in his designs on a career at sea, Smith tendered further help: "I then offered to introduce him to some shipping Merchants of my acquaintance in whose Vessels he would have been less exposed to insult and ill treatment. But it would not do."

Why would it not do? During the three weeks James was in Philadelphia, Smith had gleaned enough to suspect that James, taken with the romance of a momentary excitement, had even more dangerous plans buzzing in his brain: he hoped to find some means of joining Francisco Miranda's effort to liberate his homeland, Venezuela, from the Spanish crown. Miranda had secured a ship in New York the previous February and sailed it, with an American crew, south for the purpose. As Alan Taylor has noted, American newspapers of the period, including the *Otsego Herald* in Cooperstown, contained glowing reports of the expedition, and the liberal revolutionary's intent to spread New World revolution to South America clearly excited the ardor of many young Americans.⁶ Although Taylor does not mention this further point, when Ned Myers himself decided to run away to the sea in the winter of 1805–1806, he first served port duty on board Miranda's ship, the *Leander*, in New York prior to its departure but "became heartily tired of it" and left (*Ned Myers*, 19).

Regarding Ned's future shipmate and "editor," Smith wrote Isaac Cooper on 8 August that the stint with Miranda apparently was to be

a prelude to a naval career: "I suspect he wishes to join Miranda for the present, with some future Views to the Navy." Indeed, Smith learned that James already "had written to Mr. Simmons of the War Office to procure him a warrant, and had desired him to direct [his answer] to my care." From Smith's wording here, it would seem that James had written William Simmons, the accountant of the War Department, from New York City as he was preparing to leave there for Philadelphia, a point which, if true, would suggest how well-formed James' overall plan was shortly after he had run away, or perhaps even prior to leaving Cooperstown. Smith added that young Cooper subsequently learned that Simmons was away from Washington at the time, in New York State actually. The youth's return to New York City from Philadelphia in August was motivated in part by his failure to secure a berth in a Philadelphia ship bound for the Caribbean and in part by the hope that he still could make contact with Simmons before, as was now his intent, finding a berth on a ship there. James would not tell Philadelphian Smith his intended New York City address, but did tell him that he would check for mail at the post office each day. Smith reported this last fact to Isaac Cooper in the hope that letters from Cooperstown would reach James before he made any rash commitments, but James' reason must have been to allow word from Simmons, not Isaac or his father, to reach him. James Cooper did not receive his midshipman's warrant until 1808, as it happened, but I presume his original plan was to attempt to secure one before committing himself to a merchant vessel in 1806. I also presume that he wanted one then in order to make his future seem more organized, as this would have been a good way to convince his family that the impulsive behavior that had caused his expulsion from Yale (and, to be sure, his running away this very summer) was a thing of the past, and that he was aimed toward a respectable, perhaps glorious career. Finally, if as seems to have been the case, Cooper thought he could obtain a warrant and then sail on a merchant vessel as a means of learning the skills any naval officer would need to know, he may have been counting on a warrant in hand to help

protect him from possible impressment by the British from whatever American merchant vessel he might eventually sail on.

Cooper did not have a warrant when he departed with the *Stirling* around 1 September, but I think Alan Taylor's analysis of what he did possess rather astute. The Cooper family undoubtedly reached out via the channels suggested by Smith in his 8 August letter, perhaps following part of the advice Smith somewhat hesitantly offered based on his sense of the young man's apparent firmness: "I am not fond of giving advice, but were James my son and he was so resolutely bent on the Navy as he now appears to be, I would immediately apply for a Warrant." Smith went on to narrate James' attempts to get a warrant on his own, and then concluded with a point that I think motivated the Cooper family — surprisingly passive in dealing with James' crisis up to this point — to intervene more actively in James' plans so as to shield him somewhat from the hazards that lay before him: "he is certainly too young to be launched into the World without protection." If the link between Judge Cooper and Jacob Barker indeed existed, then Smith's earlier offer of easing James into a life at sea via commercial connections of his own may have provided them with the design that the Coopers themselves followed.

Barker, like Judge Cooper, was of Quaker background, though not from Pennsylvania — he had been born in Maine of Nantucket parents. His long mercantile career, many times awash in controversies about the sharpness and indeed honesty of his dealings, began when he was very young. He was only in his mid-twenties when Cooper shipped on the *Stirling*, but in his (not wholly reliable) *Incidents in the Life of Jacob Barker*, published in 1855, one finds the assertion that he was "probably the largest [ship owner] in the United States, with the exception of William Gray, of Salem, and was conducting a large commission business when Jefferson's embargo was adopted [late in 1807]." His vast mercantile endeavors easily could have brought him into contact with William Cooper, although Barker was a Jeffersonian and as such hardly

could have been fully intimate with Cooper. Barker, in fact, vigorously supported the embargo, speaking in its behalf at workers' and seamen's gatherings in New York even as it destroyed his own business. He was, however, close enough to one of Cooper's own associates, lawyer Miers Fisher of Philadelphia, for the link with Federalist Cooper to have been at least indirectly forged, perhaps merely for the purpose of seeing young James safely at sea. Fisher, a Philadelphia mayor who had become Cooper's partner in land development, seems to have been especially concerned with the welfare of Judge Cooper's children, writing the latter's sons in 1809 on the occasion of the Judge's death a letter of pained sympathy that eulogized their father's accomplishments.⁷ Given the closeness of his relationship to Judge Cooper, Fisher may well have been the person through whom three years earlier the judge had sought to exert himself on behalf of James. Indeed, it also is possible that it was Fisher who accompanied Barker to the *Stirling* later in the summer of 1806, with James Cooper tagging along as the boy's fate, in the form of the papers soon to be given him by Captain Johnston for signing, came closer and closer. Fisher's home, to be sure, was in Philadelphia, but he is known to have been in New York later in 1807 and to have visited Judge Cooper in Cooperstown in 1808.⁸ Of course, at this point all of what I say on the topic ends in speculation, rendered less than pure speculation perhaps by a few bits of circumstantial and associational evidence.

The Johnston narrative baldly asserts that "This Mr. Barker was a personal friend of Cooper's father, and through his influence young Cooper was shipped as a 'foremast hand on board.'" Ned Myers, who had simply come on board on his own, and in fact lied his way into his berth as apprentice to Johnston, serving as cabin boy, provides an interesting version (presumably with the approval of his editor, Cooper) of the event. Myers only briefly described Cooper's coming on board, but it is significant, I think, that he recalled no detailed negotiations regarding James' addition to the

crew. The *Stirling* was laden with its cargo of flour, so close to sailing that it departed only two days after James appeared. As an indentured cabin boy of perhaps eleven, Myers cannot be expected to have seen everything or understood all he did see or to have recalled it nearly forty years later when he dictated his book to Cooper. He probably only slowly grasped what was happening, and may even have taken Cooper at first as a would-be passenger on the voyage. I suggest this last point because Ned rather curiously introduced his account of the episode by saying, "Passengers were not common in that day, while commerce was pushed to the utmost. Our sails were bending when the consignee, followed by another merchant, came down to the ship, accompanied by a youth, who, it was understood, wished also to be received in the vessel" (*Ned Myers*, 22). Myers did not directly state that Barker and the other "merchant" wished to book passage (and in fact his later census of the ship's population makes it certain that they did not), though he may have taken them for potential passengers as they approached the ship that day. Did he at first think Cooper was to be an "uncommon" passenger, too? Perhaps, though the "also" in his statement ("[Cooper] wished also to be received in the vessel") may more likely refer to Myers' own recent signing on, not to any possible wish on the part of the merchants to be accommodated on board themselves. And it may even be that the force of "it was understood" is to signify that word of Cooper's coming had been received prior to his arrival, perhaps through Barker or the other merchant, with whom Myers' account more closely associates him. In that case, we may wonder whether the merchants had not already reached agreement with Johnston (who was half-owner of the vessel as well as its captain) to sign Cooper on. That conclusion is perhaps supported by Ned's further comment that "[Cooper] was accepted by Captain Johnston, signed the articles, and the next day he joined us, in sailor's rig. He never came to the cabin, but was immediately employed forward, in such service as he was able to perform. It was afterwards understood that he was destined for the navy." In short, the whole process by which

Cooper was shipped on the *Stirling* smacks of an arrangement concluded on shore: Cooper came on board with Barker and the other merchant so that Johnston, who had been party to the arrangement, could see him and judge him for himself. On this Ned Myers and the Johnston narrative seem to be in clear agreement.

Cooper thus shipped not as a true fore-castle hand but rather as a well connected young man with a landed identity that would give him special status on board, a not uncommon figure in Cooper's sea fiction. If in no other way, the mere fact it was "understood" how he had come aboard and that he was bound for the navy would set him apart from the rest of the crew. And, as Alan Taylor suggests, the social apparatus that surrounded Cooper's presence on the vessel carried additional significance. Taylor notes that although Ned Myers describes several encounters with British press gangs, he "never describes young James Cooper as in any danger of the impressment that imperiled all of his other shipmates, including the captain who was briefly detained." If Cooper was seemingly immune from such serious threats, why? Taylor continues, "It seems likely that he had papers, provided by his father and his father's friends, attesting that James Cooper was the son of an American gentleman and former United States Congressman: the sort of young man whose impressment would be more diplomatic trouble than it was worth to a British naval captain."¹⁰ That Cooper sailed under some such protection is suggested by the fact that he often was closely involved in the actual impressments that afflicted the *Stirling* — but in a charmed sort of way, being, for instance, the person sent ashore with Captain Johnston's traveling desk and papers when Johnston himself had been taken and was being detained there. If he indeed traveled under the protection of such documents, Cooper's potentially dangerous outburst against a British naval officer who boarded the *Stirling* and sought to impress a Swede among its crew — an outburst which Captain Johnston cut short, presumably for Cooper's own good — seems less rash and more exultant: Ned Myers tersely recalled, "Cooper had a little row with this boarding officer, but was silenced by the captain" (*Ned*

Myers, 36). Would Cooper have given such freedom to his indignation if he had not held a trump card among his papers?¹¹ And, again, Captain Johnston's intervention in the argument suggests that he bore a special charge to care for the young son of Judge Cooper.

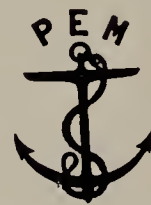
In conclusion, I would like to emphasize how Cooper's somewhat complicated masquerade as a common sailor on the *Stirling* has its counterpart in his various writings about the sea. It is clear that for the rest of his life Cooper enjoyed keeping up contact with individuals he had met during his brief career in the merchant marine and in the navy. It also is clear that his sustained interest in things nautical, which fed his imagination in the dozen sea novels and the historical narratives he penned across the three decades of his active career, became a permanent part of his intellectual and emotional character. If we probe how he imagined the sea, though, we are likely to find that his own rather mixed condition during his only transoceanic voyages in his youth in fact was reflected in his art. When he wrote of his crossing of the Atlantic in the packet ship *Hudson* in 1826, his first as a genuine passenger, he stressed how his nautical knowledge helped the crew (and the other passengers, including his wife, those "land-birds" who "were driven below, before evening" the first day on board) see what set him apart from the landsmen. The mate on the *Hudson* was able to detect Cooper's maritime background by virtue of a single expression he used in boarding the vessel from the steam launch that took his family out to it from Manhattan: later that day, Cooper recalled, "The first mate, a straightforward Kennebunk-man, gave me a wink, (he had detected my sea education by a single expression, that of 'send it an-end,' while mounting the side of the ship,) and said, 'a clear quarter-deck! a good time to take a walk, sir.'" Cooper kept up this masquerade through the 1826 crossing, and during his time in Europe and on the Mediterranean, nurtured what he called his "nautical instinct" whenever he could: even digressive comments in his accounts of the time in Europe frequently situate him as an accom-

plished hand at sea, as when Cooper asserts in his French travel book that he had no difficulty ascending a "dark well of a staircase" when paying a visit one evening in Paris because he had "passed so much of [his] youth, on top-gallant-yards, and in becketting royals."¹² Everywhere he turned, he was able to find echoes of the world he ran away to as a sixteen-year-old boy from the inland depths of Otsego.

Cooper tended to deploy his nautical knowledge in life as he deployed it in his art — as a means of suggesting that he belonged to a world marked by arcane skill and physical challenge. Yet it is worth noting that many of his imaginations of the sea also bear the traces of the special status under whose aegis he himself had entered the sailor's universe. Cooper found most fertile the fact that he was familiar with the sailor's world without being wholly of it — in some sense, he enjoyed an artist's ideal liminality. In the novel which drew most on his experience as a passenger, *Homeward Bound* (1838), Cooper thus created in the many-named Paul Blunt or Paul Powis a seeming landsman who yet betrays, as Cooper had in 1826, the sure marks of his nautical past by the care with which he acts and speaks while on board the *Montauk*. At the same time, however, Cooper gave Blunt an unmistakable doubleness that matched his own. If Blunt is no mere passenger, as Cooper was not in 1826, he is no mere sailor either. Captain Truck comments, "You have traveled this road before, Mr. Blunt, I perceive. I have suspected you of being a brother chip, from the moment I saw you first put your foot on the side-cleets in getting out of the boat. You did not come aboard parrot-toed, like a country-girl waltzing; but set the ball of your foot firmly on the wood, and swung the length of your arms, like a man who knows how to humor the muscles." Later, Captain Truck comments to another passenger, "I perceive something about that gentleman which denotes a nautical instinct" — the same phrase Cooper applied to himself in his book of French travels, published only a year earlier than the novel.¹³

For his own part, Cooper showed by his proper handling of nautical language in this book as in so many others that he, too, knew how to step about the ship. For instance, without calling attention to the practice, he referred to the crew as "the people" throughout *Homeward Bound* (e.g., pages 93, 161, 258, 274, etc.), as he had with similar lack of overt emphasis in *France* (page 5) or *Italy*.¹⁴

Again, if this pattern shows Cooper's abiding interest in keeping his nautical past alive, others reveal how much he valued having his other foot on the solid ground of a landsman's respectability. His sailor/passenger Paul Blunt is of course genteel, revealed to be — as layer after layer of his more recent identity is peeled off — none other than the long-lost son of John Effingham, and hence an heir of Cooper's own inland home. Cooper created diehard sailors such as Long Tom in *The Pilot* (1824), who like Melville's Bulkington could not stand to have the solid earth under their fluid feet. When he set his autobiographical muse adrift, however, Cooper was likely to reveal in a character such as Blunt-Effingham the liminality that made his own nautical experience a source of inspiration rather than, as it had proved for Ned Myers, a fate, and a pretty grim one at that. American writers of the nineteenth century kept what Melville called "the open independence of [their] sea" by going there in the first place with their landsman's freedom largely intact. They were anxious to prove they were not passengers precisely because they knew they were not just sailors, either.



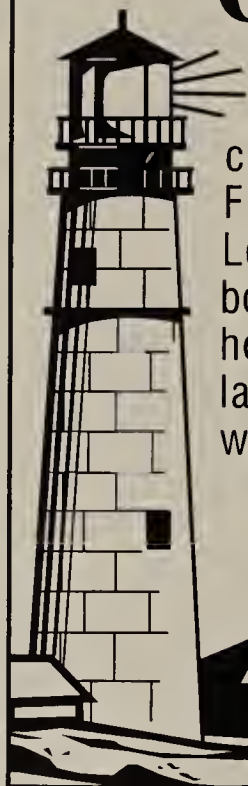
A specialist in the literature and culture of antebellum America, Wayne Franklin is currently at work on the first biography of James Fenimore Cooper to be based on full access of the family papers.

Notes

1. "Journal of a Voyage from New York to London 1849," *The Writings of Herman Melville: Journals*, Howard C. Horsford and Lynn Horth, eds. (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and Newberry Library, 1989), 5, 6, 8.
2. Alan Taylor, "James Fenimore Cooper Goes to Sea: Two Unpublished Letters by a Family Friend," *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1993), 43.
3. Hugh Egan, "Gentlemen-Sailors: The First Person Narratives of Dana, Cooper, and Melville." Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1983.
4. J. Fenimore Cooper, ed., *Ned Myers; or, A Life Before the Mast* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1843), 22-23; Edith A. Sawyer, "A Year of Cooper's Youth," *New England Magazine* 37 (1907), 498-504. It should be noted that, while Sawyer's name is listed under the title of this article, most of her text was from the pen of Alexander Johnston, Captain John Johnston's nephew. Alexander Johnston in turn based much of what he wrote on information derived from his uncle's papers, which included a March 1843 letter from Cooper. James Franklin Beard, ed., *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960-68), 4:374-76, for the corrected text of Cooper's letter; also for Beard's comments on the original publication of the "Sawyer" piece, including the version of the letter Beard reprints, under Alexander Johnston's name in the *Mt. Desert Herald*, 20 September 1883. Alexander Johnston wrote the essay sometime between 1854 and 1883. Taylor's article (*SAR* 1993, 49) mistakenly asserts that Sawyer wrote the essay herself on the basis of Captain Johnston's papers.
5. Richard R. Smith to Isaac Cooper, Philadelphia, 26 August 1806, William Cooper Papers, Paul Fenimore Cooper archives, Hartwick College, correspondence, Box 22. Smith's two letters to Isaac Cooper of 18 July and 8 August are also quoted from this source; they are printed in Taylor, *SAR* 1993, 51-52.
6. Taylor, *SAR* 1993, 47-48.
7. *Incidents in the Life of Jacob Barker, of New Orleans, Louisiana* (Washington: 1855), 31. On Barker's tie with Miers Fisher, with whom he vacationed at Ballston Spa in the summer of 1807, see 22-23. For Fisher's letter to Judge Cooper's sons, Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 3-4.
8. Note 7; Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 3, 317.
9. Sawyer, 499.
10. Taylor, *SAR* 1993, 49.
11. In his *History of the Navy of the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1839), Cooper bitterly condemned British impressment practices as an "intolerable outrage" on American national honor and individual Americans' liberty (2:128).
12. Thomas Philbrick and Constance Ayers, eds., *Gleanings in Europe: France*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 7, 27, 221.
13. *Homeward Bound: or, The Chase. A Tale of the Sea* (New York: W. A. Townsend, 1860), 206, 255.
14. John Conron and Constance Ayers Denne, eds., *Gleanings in Europe: Italy*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 63, 88.



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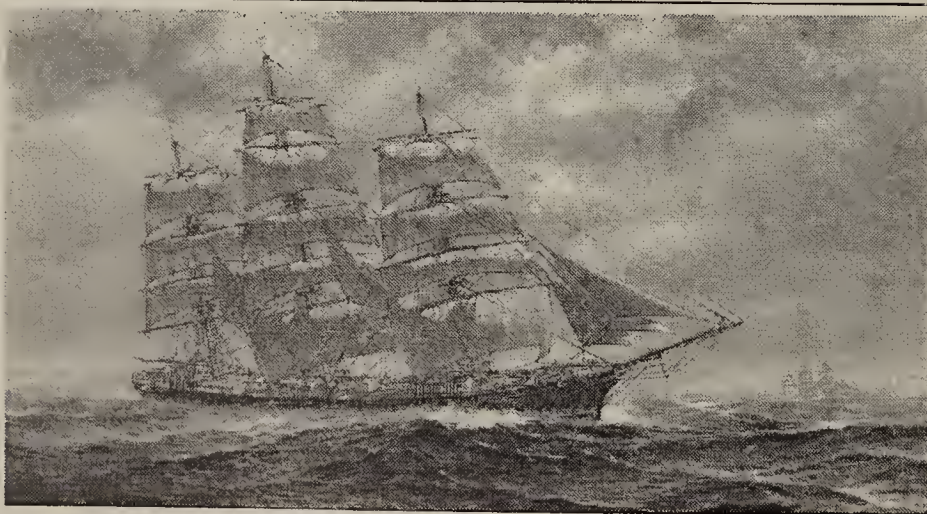
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Images of the Sailor in the Novels Of James Fenimore Cooper

HAROLD D. LANGLEY

James Fenimore Cooper has been hailed as the pioneer in the development of American sea fiction. More than a third of his novels focused on maritime life, but for most students of the American scene he is remembered mainly, if not solely, for his novels of the early pioneers on land. Those in our own time who have analyzed his fiction have criticized Cooper's tendency to editorialize and moralize about matters close to his heart. Critics have also pointed out that many of his characters are of one dimension. This is especially true of the female characters.¹ In the realm of sea fiction Cooper provided his readers with vivid images of officers and sailors.

Cooper's shipboard officers are people who know their business. They may be narrowminded, petty, corrupt, or simply incompetent about many matters of ordinary life; however, they know how to handle a sailing vessel, and they can read and interpret the moods of the sea. If this is true of the main characters, who are officers, what can be said about the sailors? Their subordinate position on shipboard as well as on shore did not lend itself to much probing of individual characters. Aboard ship the men did as they were told. On shore all seamen tended to be regarded as alike, and especially by those who had only superficial acquaintance with them. As a boy of seventeen, Cooper signed on the merchant ship *Stirling* (or *Sterling*) in New York for a voyage to England and the Mediterranean in 1806-1807, so he knew what it was like to be a sailor. In 1808 he obtained a warrant as a midshipman and served in the US Navy in New York and Oswego, New York. Family problems result-

ing from the death of his father obliged him to request a furlough in May 1810, which led to his resignation on 6 May. This experience gave him an officer's perspective. Cooper's sea novels are presented from the point of view of officers. As a novelist, he was limited only by the power of his imagination and the depth of his experience. He was free to invent and to develop sailor characters as he saw fit, and few of his readers were in a position to know how authentic the portraits were. Given these contexts, what can be said of his depiction of ordinary sailors?

To answer that question one must understand Cooper's basic goal: to celebrate and promulgate the idea of American maritime nationalism through fiction.² In 1850, when writing a new preface to his novel *The Red Rover*, originally published in 1827, Cooper noted that there was very little in the nautical history of the country to help a writer. "The annals of America are surprisingly poor in such events; a circumstance that is doubtless owing to the staid character of the people, and especially that portion of them which is addicted to navigation." As a result, it was necessary for the author "to invent his legend without looking for the smallest aid from traditions or facts."³ He was apparently referring to the practical men of New England, New York and the mid-Atlantic states who made their living on the sea, but whose writings were confined to log books, business letters, and ledgers. They might recount some of their adventures to others who were engaged in trade, but they had neither the time nor inclination to share such tales with strangers or landlubbers. It is also



James Fenimore Cooper, engraved by J. C. Buttre from a Daguerreotype by Matthew Brady of September 1850. It was used as the frontispiece in the 1854 edition of Cooper's *History of the Navy of the United States of America*. Author's collection.

unlikely that they saw any romantic dimension to life at sea.

Over two hundred years of American seafaring experience were not readily accessible. Newspaper accounts or an occasional broadside or sermon briefly focused public attention on a specific wreck or other disaster, but normally these were not the result of first hand experiences. Cooper had to invent stories and characters to realize his goal. He could draw upon his own experiences to make the technical details of ship handling correct. To Cooper, the American seaman was a man cut off from the forms and values of the shore. The sea is his element, and perpetual contact with it ennobled him. The nature of the seaman's calling made him hardy,

daring, energetic, resourceful and humble. He became a democratic ideal. Cooper believed that democracy improved the character of the lower classes, and contact with the sea made a man moral and noble.

As a youth, Cooper went through a rebellious stage, and as an adult he had firm opinions on many subjects that he did not hesitate to share with his readers, yet these characteristics are not reflected in his depictions of sailors. At sea, at least, they are always calm, confident and steadfast. When relating the reaction of a Royal Navy sailor at the wheel to the seizure of his ship, Cooper wrote: "He was a seaman, of course, and one of those quiet, orderly men who usually submit to the powers that be." In the same novel he has a master declare that not every man can become a seaman for it is a natural gift "like singing, or rope-dancing."⁴ When Cooper deals with the faults of sailors, such as an addiction to liquor or insubordinate or craven behavior, such men are often foreign. Most of his American seamen reflect high standards of conduct.

A memorable seaman to whom we are introduced in Cooper's first sea novel, *The Pilot*, published in 1823, is Tom Coffin. He is an old-timer, a former whaler out of Nantucket. Now he is a coxswain in the Continental Navy, and he and his shipmates are involved in a raid on England during the American Revolution. While Coffin is ashore, he sees a dead whale in the water and feels very sad about it. In another place the whale would be a source of wealth for Tom, but here, in enemy country, he can do nothing about it. Thoughts of making money belong to another place and time.⁵

As the story progresses, we learn bits and pieces about Tom. To Katherine Plowden, the heroine of the story, he gives a bit of his proud Nantucket genealogy. He also tells her: "I'm old and I'm stiff, now, young madam, but, afore I

was nineteen, I stood at the head of the dance, at a ball on the capes and that with a partner almost as handsome as yourself." Here we run into a theme that recurs in several of Cooper's sea novels — a fascination with aging seamen. Many of the subordinate characters are past their prime and they think about death. Looking at the waves breaking against the rocks on the English coast, Tom says to an Englishman: "These waves, to me, are what land is to you; I was born on them, and I have always meant that they should be my grave."⁶

Tom and his companions are captured, and when he realizes that confinement in a prison ship awaits him, he tells a British officer that "you may tell them that they can save the expense of one man's rations by hanging him, if they please, and that is old Tom Coffin." The British have no intention of doing that. Instead they ply Tom with liquor in order to get him drunk, and in that state they hope to get him to enlist as a soldier. But they underestimate Tom's capacity. When the proposal to enlist is put to him, he rejects it by reciting the sailor's code of loyalty: "A messmate before a shipmate; a shipmate before a stranger; a stranger before a dog — but a dog before a soldier!"⁷ Later, the situation changes. Tom and the others escape and he dies at sea, as he wished.

Tom Coffin is such a finely etched character that he has intrigued various students of Cooper's fiction. In 1875, Samuel Adams Drake wrote that Midshipman Reuben Chase of John Paul Jones' ship, the *Bon Homme Richard*, was the model for Coffin. Later, in 1900, William B. Shubrick Clymer thought that a Mr. Irish, the first mate of the merchant ship *Stirling*, in which Cooper first went to sea, was the inspiration for Coffin. Marcel Clavel writing in 1938 and John Henry Clagett in 1954 suggested other members of the *Stirling's* crew as more likely models.⁸



Tom Coffin on the wreck of the *Ariel*. An illustration by F. O. C. Darley for *The Pilot*, an 1860 publication of Cooper's works. Author's collection.

Identifying personal characteristics of eighteenth century seamen is a very difficult task. Existing memoirs and letters, whether from soldiers or sailors, tend to be painfully brief and matter-of-fact. The sentiments uttered by Tom Coffin, and the way he said them tend to be more nineteenth century than late eighteenth. Whatever the case may be, the character adds much to the story.

In an attempt to repeat the success of *The Pilot*, Cooper published his other historical romance *The Red Rover* in 1827. The two principal sailor characters are Dick Fid and his shipmate, a black sailor named Scipio Africa. "Both had passed the middle age; and both, in their appearances, furnished the strongest proofs

of long exposure to the severity of many climates, and to numberless tempests." Dick was "of a short, thickset, powerful frame, in which, by a happy ordering of nature... the strength was principally seated about the broad and brawny shoulders and sinewy arms.... His head was in proportion to the more immediate members; the forehead low, and nearly covered with hair; the eyes small, obstinate, sometimes fierce, and often dull; the nose snub, coarse, and vulgar; the mouth large and voracious; the teeth short, clean, and perfectly sound; and the chin broad, manly, and even expressive." Cooper says that Fid's black shipmate, Scipio, was a man of "subdued habits and inclinations." He was taller than Fid. "His features were more elevated than common; his eye was mild, easily excited to joy, and, like that of his companion, sometimes humorous. His head was beginning to be sprinkled with gray, his skin had lost the shining jet color which had distinguished it in its youth, and all his limbs and movements bespoke a man whose frame had been equally indurated and stiffened by toil." We find him seated in a bar tossing pebbles into the air and catching them. The sleeve of his jacket is rolled up to the elbow revealing "an arm that might have served as a model for the limb of Hercules."⁹

While the two are in a tavern in Newport, Rhode Island, Dick gets into an argument with Jack Nightingale, the boatswain of a slaver in the harbor. Nightingale is described as having a "stature which greatly exceeded six feet, enormous whiskers, that quite concealed a moiety of his grim countenance; a scar, which was the memorial of a badly-healed gash, that had once threatened to divide that moiety in quarters; limbs in proportion; the whole rendered striking by the dress of a seaman; a long, tarnished silver chain, and a little whistle of that same metal, served to render the individual in question sufficiently remarkable."¹⁰

With their friend, Harry Wilder, a Royal Navy officer on detached duty, Dick and Scipio sign on board the ship *Dolphin*, whose captain turns out to be the notorious pirate, the Red Rover. In the course of the story, the Red Rover transfers Wilder, Dick, Scipio and two captured women to a British naval vessel. Wilder tells the

navy captain the true nature of the Red Rover, and the captain orders an attack on the pirate ship. During the engagement the navy captain is killed and Wilder, Dick and Scipio are captured. Scipio dies defending Wilder. The pirate crew wants to kill Wilder and Dick but a chaplain pleads for them and the Red Rover lets them go. The epilogue to the story takes place twenty years later during which time the American Revolution was fought and won. One day the Red Rover turns up in Newport, Rhode Island, and tells Wilder that during the war he fought on the side of the American colonists. Apparently he feels that by this action he has redeemed himself for his past conduct.

One of the curious elements in this story is the portrayal of a British naval officer with two close friends who are enlisted men. In this case, Wilder was rescued by the two seamen when he was a child, and he owes almost everything to them. For most of the novel, Dick and Scipio treat Wilder as they would any other officer, but the friendship is there and it endures.

Cooper explored the relationship between a white officer and a black seaman again in *Afloat and Ashore* and its sequel, *Miles Wallingford*, both published in 1844. In this case, Miles Wallingford, Jr., the son of a prosperous owner of an estate in Ulster County, New York, goes to sea after the death of his parents, and leaves his property in the custody of a clergyman. With him goes Rupert Hardinge, the son of the clergyman. Nebuchadnezzar Cawbonney or "Neb," a slave boy on the estate, takes them by boat to New York. Miles and Rupert sign on as green hands aboard a merchant ship. Neb stows away on the ship and on the third day out he is discovered and hauled up on deck. The first mate strikes Neb while questioning him. Miles goes to his defense and explains that Neb is his slave. The captain comes on the scene, and an agreement is reached whereby Neb can remain on board but will receive no pay. The close relationship between Miles and Neb is later the source of much joking on the ship at the expense of Miles. Neb later becomes a favorite with all on board. He is a zealous, hard-working

sailor.

When pirates threaten the ship off Sumatra, it is Neb who puts himself in front of Miles as they prepare to receive boarders. Miles praises Neb's courage to the captain. The three young sailors have some more excitement during the undeclared naval war with France, 1798–1801, before they get back to New York. At the end of the voyage, Rupert decides that he has had enough of the sea. This is fine with Miles, for his friendship with his neighbor diminished during the voyage when he found Rupert shirking his duty and putting an extra burden on Neb.

After a brief visit home, Miles and Neb are off to sea again. This time Neb is rated as an ordinary seaman and Miles becomes the third mate of a merchant ship. They voyage to the Pacific Northwest, to Hawaii, and the Pacific Ocean. In the course of it all, Miles becomes quite close to Captain Moses Marble. Neb becomes a very proficient sailor. Speaking of Neb, Miles says: "He was the oddest mixture of superstitious dread and lion-hearted courage that I ever met with in life."¹¹ When they come back to New York, Neb has earned about \$900 dollars in wages and prize money, and Miles wants to give him his freedom. Mr. Hardinge, who is still managing Miles' New York property, suggests that the emancipation be delayed until Neb is of age. Miles tells Neb that he intends to free him after their next voyage. Neb does not think too much about this promise for he enjoys going to sea with Miles. Although unstated, it seems that he also enjoys being treated as a very competent sailor and a valuable member of the crew.

The further adventures of these two are set forth in *Miles Wallingford*. The sequel is necessary, for *Afloat and Ashore* ends rather abruptly, leaving a number of questions unresolved. It almost seems that when the book reached a certain size, Cooper sent it off to the pub-

lisher.

Miles Wallingford takes place during the years 1803–1804. Miles continues to follow the sea and is captain of his own ship. Neb continues to serve with him. As the story progresses, we learn more about Neb, and what a splendid seaman he is. Cooper describes him as "a muscular, active black, who walked as if his legs were all springs." In another place, he is referred to as "that noble fellow, true as steel," and who "had a seaman's faculties in perfection." His delicate touch on the ship's wheel is noted admiringly. When Neb is washed overboard in a storm, Miles says that "his patient servitude, his virtues, his faults, his dauntless courage, his unbounded devotion to myself, had taken a strong hold on my heart, and his loss had greatly troubled me,



The Red Rover stops the pirates from killing the prisoners. Scipio has fallen on the deck and has pulled down one of his attackers. Standing behind him are Dick Fid and Harry Wilder. An illustration by F. O. C. Darley for the 1860 edition of *The Red Rover*. Author's collection.

since the time it occurred."¹² Fortunately, Neb is later rescued.

When the two sailors return to their friends on the Hudson River, we learn of Neb's courtship of a slave girl also attached to Miles' estate. Eventually, Miles and Neb retire from the sea, marry and raise families on the old homestead.

Another black man who figures briefly in *Miles Wallingford* is Diogenes Billings, the cook in the merchant ship *Dawn*. At one point Diogenes and Neb are captured by a French ship and they become involved in a plot to recover their ship from the prize crew. The two contemplate the coming fight calmly. Diogenes says to Miles: "They's only French, we can handle 'em like children." At another point, when the ship is in a heavy storm, Diogenes sleeps through it. Miles notes that habit and education have given Diogenes confidence in the ship's officers.¹³

Cooper introduces two black seamen as minor characters in *Rose Budd*, first serialized in a magazine in 1846 and published in book form two years later as *Jack Tier*. On the merchantman *Molly Squash* we find Josh, a black cabin "boy" who is grey haired, wrinkled and nearly sixty years of age. He has sailed with Captain Stephen Spike for many years. He is not very intelligent, but he is faithful. His friend on the ship is the black cook, Simon. Near the end of the story, as his ship is about to go on the rocks, Spike makes preparations to save himself and a few others, leaving the rest of the crew to perish. When the ship strikes the rocks, the captain boards a yawl which is now overloaded with eighteen people. Carrying twice the rated weight, the yawl rides low in the water, and there is not enough room for the men to row. Waves menace the boat and two or three hands are engaged in constant bailing. Josh and Simon are seated side by side on one end of the thwart. At the other end are two old sailors with whom Spike had been in consultation a little earlier. Spike orders Josh to pull in a fender that is dragging alongside. When Josh leans his head and body over the side to look for the fender, the two old sailors push him overboard. Spike orders Simon to go to his rescue, and when the cook bends forward to obey, he is thrown overboard as well. A young white seaman moves to rescue Simon and is

pitched from the boat. Spike and his collaborators thus reduced the weight in the yawl by five hundred pounds as a result of what appeared to be accidents to the unknowing. Spike gets rid of others in the boat, including two women. By this time, a cutter from a pursuing man-of-war overtakes the yawl and Spike is shot and killed.¹⁴

How does the use of blacks in the crews relate to historical evidence? Prior to the Civil War, it is alleged that blacks constituted about one-twentieth of the crews of naval vessels. A regulation issued by the Navy Department in 1839 limited the number of blacks to five percent of the crew. Ira Dye's study of seamen's protection certificates issued by the port of Philadelphia for 1812-1815 indicates that 17.6 percent of those who received certificates were blacks engaged in seafaring. His analysis of the British prisoner of war records for the War of 1812 reveals that blacks and mulattoes made up 18.4 percent of the prisoners held in Dartmoor, 20.2 percent of those at Chatham, and 18.9 of those at Portsmouth. Of the 388 blacks and mulattoes in Dartmoor, almost a third were born in the slave states of the South. Dye believes that it is most likely "that free blacks went into seafaring in numbers greatly exceeding that which would be expected from their numbers in American society, attracted by the relatively nondiscriminatory conditions that they found in the society of seafarers."¹⁵ It is believed that in merchant ships there was a high percentage of blacks engaged in the coastal trade, so it is entirely possible that some merchant vessels had their equivalent of a Nebuchadnezzar Cawbonny, but it is doubtful that in real life many had a close relationship with their captains.

Another point that Cooper makes about the crew of the *Molly Squash* is their age:

A peculiar feature of this crew, however, was the circumstances that they were all middle-aged men, with the exception of the mate, and all thoroughbred seadogs.... If the crew wanted a little in the elasticity of youth, it possessed the steadiness and experience of their time

in life, every man appearing to know exactly what to do, and when to do it.

Further on, we are told that Captain Spike had commanded the same crew for some time. They had been "picked up in various ports, from time to time, as the brig had wanted hands, they were of nearly as many different nations as there were persons."¹⁶ They remain as figures in the background, however, and the reader does not meet them as individual characters.

The importance of age and experience in bringing about a successful conclusion to an enterprise is stressed again in Cooper's novel *Sea Lions*, published in 1849. This time it is Stephen Stimson, the boat steerer and the oldest member of the group of sailors from Oak Pond, Long Island, who gives his captain the information on how to prepare the body to withstand cold temperatures to survive an Antarctic winter. It is not just age and experience that Cooper celebrates, but humility in the face of nature and faith in God. Stimson, the personification of religious and nautical authority, admonishes and debates with his companion, Roswell Gardiner, who is full of skepticism and doubt on matters of religion. Thomas Philbrick believed that Stimson was "the purest embodiment of Cooper's protean image of the seaman, that image which in some form enters into the composition of every portrait in the novelist's gallery of sailors, from Long Tom Coffin to Moses Marble. Unlike his predecessors, Stimson is unallayed by human failings: he never becomes angry, stubborn or vengeful; he never blunders, never swears, never drinks, never even chews tobacco."¹⁷ He is also zealous in his practice of religion and compares himself to the apostles. The result is that he becomes an insufferable bore.

The historical record does not provide evidence of a comparable collection of virtues in most seafarers, but there is data on the matter of age. A study of the Seamen's Protection Certificates issued in Philadelphia for the period 1812 to 1815 indicates that of the 790 protections issued, forty-three percent were for men aged

twenty to twenty-three. Only six percent were for those over forty. Boys between the ages of ten and sixteen constituted 5.5 percent of the "seamen" of the group.¹⁸ So middle-aged men were definitely a minority. Why did Cooper use such atypical representations? We do not know, but one wonders if the author, who was sixty years of age when he published the *Sea Lions*, liked to think of himself as still young and able to do the things he did as a youth despite his advancing years.

Seafaring men had to live by their wits as well as their strength, and none more so than those engaged in illegal trade. We meet the most skillful of the illegal traders of the early eighteenth century in *The Water-Witch*, published in 1830. The novel's title is the name of a ship engaged in contraband commerce, under the command of Master Seadrift. When *The Water-Witch* makes a visit to New York, the captain of a British warship and an alderman go on board her. They are impressed by her neatness and order. The visitors notice the crew, who are described as "fifteen or twenty grave-looking seamen, who were silently lounging with folded arms, about the vessel...whose appearance did not suggest any love of violence." Cooper tells us: "They were, without an exception, men who had reached middle age, of weather-worn and thoughtful countenances, many of them even showing heads that had begun to be grizzled more by time than even by exposure." Later, when the *Water-Witch* is being pursued by the British warship *Coquette*, a British officer admires the speed with which the crew changed sail: "the rascals are nimble as pickpockets in a crowd!," says the officer.¹⁹ Despite the larger number of hands in the warship, they cannot gain on the smuggler.

We are given only bits of information about Master Seadrift of the *Water-Witch*, but the character of one of his trusted men is established early. A sailor with a booming voice hails a flat-bottomed, canoe-like craft called a periagua which serves as a ferry boat in the Hudson River. His name is Thomas Tiller, and:

He was of a firmly knit and active frame, standing exactly six feet in his

stockings. The shoulders though square were compact, the chest full and high, the limbs round, neat and muscular — the whole indicating a form in which strength and activity were apportioned with the greatest accuracy.

A small bullet head was set firmly on its broad foundation, and it was thickly covered with a mass of brown hair that was already a little grizzled. The face was that of a man of thirty, and it was worthy of the frame, being manly, bold, decided, and rather handsome; though it expressed little more than high daring, perfect coolness, some obstinacy, and a certain degree of contempt for others, that its owner did not always take trouble to conceal. The color was a rich, deep, and uniform red, such as much exposure is apt to give to men whose complexions are by nature light and florid.²⁰

Cooper also tells us that the black workers on shore were very impressed by the manner of this sailor. "There was, in truth, something in the reckless air, the decision, and the manly attitudes of so fine a specimen of a seaman, that might have attracted notice from those who were more practiced in the world than the little crowd of admirers he left behind."²¹

Once on the ferry, Tiller makes his presence felt, to the displeasure of some of the male passengers. He goes on board the British warship and talks to the skipper, Captain Ludlow, about signing on. Ludlow, who is used to being treated with deference by the sailors, is shocked by the "audacious eye and calm mien of the mariner" before him. Nevertheless, he controls himself, and learns that Tom Tiller wishes to sign on to the ship. "I have met men of your humor before, my friend," says Ludlow, "and I have not now to learn, that a thorough man-of-war's man is as impudent on shore as he is obedient afloat." Tom tells the captain that he wants to come aboard, meet his future messmates, judge their characters, and to see if he likes the ship. Later, if he finds it convenient, he will quit the ship. Although Ludlow is stunned by this impudence, he

agrees to the terms. Subsequently Tom Tiller induces the captain to go ashore with him, where Ludlow is disarmed and taken prisoner by the men of the *Water-Witch*.²²

Arrogance may be seen as an admirable quality in this instance and a reflection of Cooper's democratic beliefs. He was disgusted by those of his fellow countrymen who were impressed by titles and nobility, and who fawned over 'well-born Englishmen ten to fifteen years after the American Revolution. When characters in the *Water-Witch* display an arrogance toward British authority figures in the early eighteenth century, they seem like prophets of the American Revolution.

Cooper's interest in egalitarian attitudes and a disregard of differences in rank and social position were expressed in his novel, *The Two Admirals*, published in 1842. Set in the heavily class-conscious England of 1745, he has Vice-Admiral Sir Gervaise Oakes of the Royal Navy saying to his shore-bound friend and baronet, Sir Wycherly Wychemcombe, that:

...an admiral is not disgraced by keeping company with a boatswain, if the latter is an honest man. It is true we have our customs, and what we call our quarter-deck forward officers; which is court end and city, on board ship; but a master belongs to the first,[or court end] and the master of the Plantagenet, Sandy McYarn, dines with me once a month, as regularly as he enters a new work at the top of his log book.²³

In this way, the admiral tells the baronet that it is all right to have a master, who was a warrant officer, dine with him. Shore-bound readers probably did not know that a master was appointed by a warrant issued by the Navy Board, as distinct from an officer who received his commission from the Admiralty.

Another indication of Cooper's interest in minimizing the differences between people at sea or associated with seamen appears in relation to

his characterization of women. Cooper, like a few authors including Shakespeare, was intrigued by the idea of women disguising themselves as men. Katherine Plowden in *The Pilot* was the first character in Cooper's sea fiction to impersonate a male. In *The Red Rover*, the cabin "boy" turns out to be a girl in disguise. The idea is carried to its most implausible extreme in *Jack Trier*, when the wife of the captain dresses up as a seaman and follows him to sea. When the captain signs on this new hand he does not recognize his wife or her voice. We are told that she maintained her successful deception for twenty years!

In the Continental Army and in the Civil War, there are instances of women disguising themselves as men and fighting alongside other male soldiers. Likewise, there is a documented case where a woman disguised herself as a sailor and set off with a contingent for Sacket's Harbor on Lake Ontario during the War of 1812. In that instance, she was discovered early in the journey and discharged. There may have been other women who managed to enlist in the US Navy, but they have not come to light. There are stories about women who served in foreign merchant ships, and a few instances where women were reported in the US merchant service. There is no evidence of anything similar in the US Navy during the antebellum years. It has been suggested that Cooper may have been influenced by Shakespeare in the use of the disguise ploy. Perhaps so. It is also possible that the device was used to involve female readers more in the development of the story. One can only speculate. In any case, the historical evidence for such activity on the American scene is very meager.²⁴

The way in which the reading public perceived the sailor began to change when sailors themselves published accounts of their experiences. The earliest seems to have been Nathaniel



A boat in which Nebuchadnezzar Cawbonney, Moses Marble, and Miles Wallingford are sailing is run down by a warship. An illustration by F. O. C. Darley for the 1860 edition of *Miles Wallingford*. Author's collection.

Ames, the son of a Massachusetts congressman, who went to sea after he was expelled from Harvard. Fifteen years later, in 1830, he published *A Mariner's Sketches*, and followed this two years later with *Nautical Reminiscences*. Ames had read *The Pilot*, and he was extremely critical of the depiction of Tom Coffin, which he regarded as a caricature. He also seems to have been jealous of Cooper and his own hastily written contributions to nautical lore did not have a wide audience.²⁵

Another early work was by William McNally, an ex-navy gunner, who published *Evils and Abuses in the Naval and Merchant Service, Exposed; ...* in 1839. McNally drew upon his own experience and on that of some other men to

bring to the public's attention what really happened to those who had to earn their living as sailors. He also offered specific remedies for eliminating abuses and improving the living and working environment. McNally published the book at his own expense, and apparently it did not have a wide readership. Nevertheless, it is of interest to note that he also read some of Cooper's novels and that he did not share the sentiments of Ames. McNally observed:

Often has fancy pictured to me some follower of the Red Rover, in the rough weather-beaten countenance of an old quarter gunner or boatswain's mate; I could conjure the quarter master on the poop, into a second edition of 'long Tom Coffin,' of glorious memory....²⁶

McNally's enthusiasm for Cooper's novels, and other literature and history, may have been transmitted to some of his shipmates, for he says that: "When I had these books I used to go on the forecandle, or between two guns, and read aloud to a knot of perhaps twenty or thirty, who would gather round and listen."²⁷

The biggest audience for a sailor's account of a voyage was won by Richard Henry Dana with *Two Years Before the Mast*, first published in 1840. Dana sailed to California and back in the brig *Pilgrim*, then wrote a book about the experience based on his shipboard journal. His reason for publishing the book was "to present the life of a common sailor at sea as it really is, the light and the dark together." He carefully avoided any mention of his impressions of events until the final chapter of the book. The opinions recorded at the end of the work were the result of later reflections on the experience. He hoped to "call more attention to the welfare of seamen," to provide information on their real condition, "to promote in any measure their religious and moral improvement, and diminish the hardships of their daily life...."²⁸

The commercial success of Dana's book inspired other sailors to present their own accounts of life at sea. Landlubbers no longer needed Cooper to present a fictional view of

American sailors. Cooper himself was influenced by Dana and by his own experience in writing a *History of the Navy of the United States of America*, published in 1839.²⁹ The most accurate portrayal of an actual sailor by Cooper is in *Ned Myers*, a non-fictional account published in 1843. This work came about as a result of an 1843 letter to Cooper written by Edward R. Myers, an old shipmate of the novelist which led to a meeting in New York, and to Myers' five month stay at Cooperstown, New York. During that time, Cooper wrote a small volume that is basically an edited account of Myers' experiences in the merchant service and the Navy. It is one of the finest memoirs of a seaman during the first half of the nineteenth century, but it did not enjoy a wide circulation and was soon out of print. Within a few years of its publication, the volume was difficult to find. It was not reprinted until 1989.³⁰

Whatever their shortcomings as fiction, Cooper's sea novels are a marvelous source of information and insights into nineteenth century seafaring. They also supply some useful vignettes which, when used with other evidence, help us to get a clearer conception of the realities of the sailor's life, and perhaps a more human portrait as well. In the last analysis, we can reflect upon what Cooper himself said in the preface to *Afloat and Ashore*: "All that is necessary is, that the pictures be true to nature, if not absolutely drawn from living sitters."



Harold D. Langley is Curator of Naval History Emeritus at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History and an Adjunct Professor of History at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. His most recent work is Medicine in the Early U.S. Navy (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

Notes

1. The assistance of Professor Timothy J. Runyan of East Carolina University is gratefully acknowledged. Thomas Philbrick, *James Fenimore Cooper and the Development of American Sea Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961); Thomas R. Lounsbury, *James Fenimore Cooper* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1882; reprint (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1968), 278–281; Stephen Railton, *Fenimore Cooper: A Study of His Life and Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 52–53.
2. Philbrick, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 44–45; Paul David Nelson, “James Fenimore Cooper’s Maritime Nationalism, 1820–1850,” *Military Affairs* 61:3 (October, 1977), 129–132.
3. Cooper, *The Red Rover*, Darley edition (New York: D. Appleton, 1892), preface, 7.
4. James Fenimore Cooper, *Miles Wallingford*. Darley edition. (New York: D. Appleton, 1892), 229, 405.
5. James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pilot*. Darley edition. (New York: D. Appleton, 1892), 229.
6. *Ibid.*, 290.
7. *Ibid.*, 317, 280–281.
8. Philbrick, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 299n; Samuel Adams Drake, *Nooks and Corners of the New England Coast* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1975); William B. Shubrick Clymer, *James Fenimore Cooper* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1900); Marcel Clavel, *Fenimore Cooper and His Critics: American, British, and French Criticisms of the Novelist’s Early Works* (Aix-en-Provence: Imprimerie universitaire de Provence, E. Fourcine, 1938); John Henry Claggett, “Cooper and the Sea: Naval Life and Naval History in the Writings of James Fenimore Cooper,” (unpublished doctoral dissertation, 2 vols. Yale University, 1954).
9. Cooper, *The Red Rover*, 31–32.
10. *Ibid.*, 46.
11. James Fenimore Cooper, *Afloat and Ashore*. Darley edition. (New York: D. Appleton, 1892), 359.
12. James Fenimore Cooper, *Miles Wallingford*, 109, 315, 244, 324.
13. *Ibid.*, 248, 313.
14. James Fenimore Cooper, *Jack Tier*. Darley edition. (New York: D. Appleton, 1892), 18, 416–419.
15. Harold D. Langley, “The Negro in the Navy and Merchant Service, 1789–1860,” *The Journal of Negro History* 62:3 (July, 1967): 275–280; Ira Dye, “Seafarers of 1812: A Profile,” *Prologue* 5:1 (Spring, 1973): 3–14.
16. Cooper, *Jack Tier*, 18, 467.
17. James Fenimore Cooper, *The Sea Lions*. Darley edition. (New York: D. Appleton, 1892), passim; Philbrick, *James Fenimore Cooper and the Development of American Sea Fiction*, 239.
18. Ira Dye, “American Seafarers and Impressment: Some Insights on the Early American Seaman and His World,” unpublished paper presented in Washington, DC, March 1974. I am grateful to Ira Dye for a copy of this paper. An examination of American prisoner of war records at the Dartmoor depot in Great Britain during the War of 1812 showed that out of 6,537 records, the average age of seafarers of all ranks was 27.12 years and the median age was twenty-five. There were 2,900 seamen in the twenty-one to twenty-nine age group who constituted 86 percent of the total. There were 1,400+ in the thirty to thirty-nine age group, of which 14% were officers or petty officers; 1,160 were seamen. There were 314 seamen in the forty to forty-nine age group, 128 in the fifty to fifty-nine bracket, and sixteen seamen over sixty years of age. Ira Dye, “Physical and Social Profiles of Early American Seafarers, 1812–1815,” Colin Howell and Richard J. Twomey, eds., *Jack Tar in History: Essays in the History of Maritime Life and Labour* (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Acadiensis Press, 1991), 221–222.
19. Cooper, *The Water-Witch*, 172, 268.
20. *Ibid.*, 39; Robert Gerard, “Periaguas in the Hudson River,” *American Neptune* 54:4 (Fall, 1994): 278–279.
21. Cooper, *The Water-Witch*, 71.
22. *Ibid.*, 66–69, 75–76. When Cooper’s old friend Captain William Bradford Shubrick, USN, wrote to him that he liked the sea portions of *The Water-Witch*, the author replied that it was “a book rather for sailors than landsmen...” Cooper to Shubrick, 31 May 1831 in James Franklin Beard, ed., *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*. 5 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960–1964), 2:79.
23. James Fenimore Cooper, *The Two Admirals*. Darley edition. (New York: D. Appleton, 1892), 42.
24. Julie Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids: Women Who Dressed as Men in Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness*. Paperback edition. (London: Pandora Press, 1990), 52, 93, 123–125, 132–141; Suzanne J. Stark, *Female Tars: Women Aboard Ship in the Age of Sail* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996), especially chapter 3 which deals with women in disguise in naval crews; Margaret Creighton and Lisa Norling, eds., *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700–1920* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Dianne Dugaw, *Dangerous Examples: Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1600–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Linda Grant De Pauw, *Seafaring Women* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982). Most of the examples cited by De Pauw in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are in the British service or in the merchant and whaling enterprises. Elizabeth Little, “The Female Sailor on the *Christopher Mitchell*: Fact and Fantasy,” *American Neptune* 54:4 (Fall, 1994): 252–258; Daniel Cohen, “‘The Female Marine’ in the Era of Good Feelings: Cross Dressing and the ‘Genius’ of Nathaniel Coverly,

- Jr." *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* (October 1993): 103:359–396; Diary of Usher Parsons, 28 September 1812, Rhode Island Historical Society; W. B. Gates, "Cooper's Indebtedness to Shakespeare," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 67:5 (1952), 716–731.
25. Nathaniel Ames, *A Mariner's Sketches* (Providence: Cory, Marshall and Hammond, 1830), 238–239; *Nautical Reminiscences* (Providence: Marshall, 1832); Philbrick, *Cooper and the Development of American Sea Fiction*, 114, 305 n.
 26. William McNally, *Evils and Abuses in the Naval and Merchant Service, Exposed; With Proposals for Their Remedy and Redress* (Boston: Cassady and March, 1839), 192.
 27. *Ibid.*, 160.
 28. Richard Henry Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1840), 4–5.
 29. James Fenimore Cooper, *History of the Navy of the United States of America*. 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1839); Philbrick, *Cooper and the Development of American Sea Fiction*, 124–127. Cooper's *History of the Navy* appeared in a London and two Paris editions the same year it was issued in the United States. A second and third edition were published in Philadelphia in 1840 and 1843. Another Philadelphia publisher reprinted the volumes in 1846 and 1847, as did a New York press in 1851. One-volume editions appeared in Philadelphia in 1841 and in New York in 1853. Enlarged editions with additional material were published in New York in 1856 and 1864.
 30. James Fenimore Cooper, *Ned Myers; or, A Life Before the Mast*, with an introduction and notes by William S. Dudley (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989). The 1843 edition was published in Philadelphia by Lea and Blanchard.



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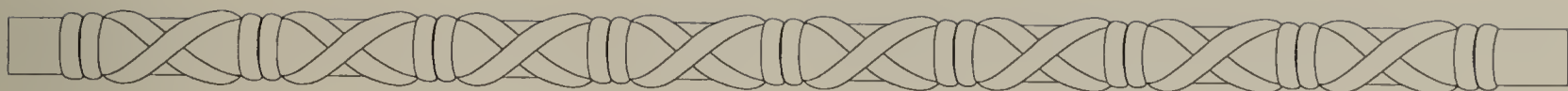
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Cooper and the Sea: A Bibliographical Note

ROBERT D. MADISON

James Fenimore Cooper's career as a writer began and ended at sea, and like the sea itself, extended from pole to pole. Among his earliest essays (for the *Literary and Scientific Repository* in 1821–1822) are reviews of Arctic exploration by Scoresby and Parry, while his penultimate novel, *The Sea Lions* (1849), is set partially in the dreary wastes of the Antarctic continent. It was *The Pilot* (1824), however, that not only initiated Cooper's career as a maritime writer, but also defined the genre of sea fiction itself. In part a response to the befuddled whale-manship of Sir Walter Scott's *The Pirate* (1821), *The Pilot* epitomized the maritime conflicts of man against man, man against the sea, and man against the beasts of the sea, through its chapters on naval combat, storm and shipwreck, and the whale hunt — all united with a Paul Jones theme. Cooper not only set the pattern for his own subsequent novels, but also defined the mainstream of American literature of the sea to the end of the millennium.

Cooper built on the success of *The Pilot* with the publication of *The Red Rover* (1827) and *The Water-Witch* (1830), a pair of romances in the Byronic strain written while Cooper was abroad in England and Europe. Cooper then turned to themes nearer at hand to produce his European trilogy, the first of which, *The Bravo* (1831), is highly maritime in its Venetian setting and characterization, though not usually classified with Cooper's sea novels.

In *A Letter to His Countrymen* (1834), Cooper claimed to have given up fiction, but never-

theless the following year he produced a Swiftian political satire, *The Monikins*, whose portrait of sealing skipper Noah Poke, based extremely loosely on Antarctic explorer Nathaniel B. Palmer, is a gem of maritime characterization. When Cooper returned to straightforward fiction writing with the packet-ship tale *Homeward Bound* (1838), he developed the Poke figure as Captain Truck, the central character of a pivotal sea novel which moves away from the romanticism of the earlier works and foreshadows increasing realism in the sea novels.

In 1839 Cooper published the first of several editions of *The History of the Navy of the United States of America*, a life-long work which had been in Cooper's mind since his review of Thomas Clark's *Naval History* in the *Literary and Scientific Repository* in 1821. Cooper's own naval history opened a decade of intense naval writing that was to include "The *Edinburgh Review* on James's *Naval Occurrences* and Cooper's *Naval History*" (1842), *The Battle of Lake Erie* (1843), *Ned Myers* (1843), "An Elaborate Review" in *Proceedings of the Naval Court Martial in the Case of Alexander Slidell Mackenzie* (1844), and *Lives of Distinguished American Naval Officers* (published 1846, from sketches written 1842–1846). Two other pieces apparently begun during this period were published posthumously: "Old Ironsides" (1853) and "The Battle of Plattsburg Bay" (1869).

Cooper's imagination influenced his next two Leatherstocking Tales, *The Pathfinder* (1840) and *The Deerslayer* (1841), in a more

positive way than in *Mercedes of Castile* (1840), a novel of Columbian voyaging usually considered among Cooper's weakest. In *The Two Admirals* (1842) Cooper experimented with fleet action and the Nelson legend, and Nelson appears as a minor character in *The Wing-and-Wing* (1842), a Mediterranean novel that combines his earlier Romanticism with the harshly realistic characterization of Yankee Ithuel Bolt. In this work, perhaps the last that could properly be called a romance, Cooper's idealistic portraiture of both ships and the men in them reached its clearest expression.

After bringing his sailor-biography *Ned Myers* to a hasty conclusion, Cooper experimented with the autobiographical voice in his double novel *Afloat and Ashore* (1844), a voice of which he was to make extensive use in the landlocked Littlepage Trilogy. In 1846 he began his only serialized novel, "The Islets of the Gulf; or, Rose Budd," later *Jack Tier* (1848). This work, a deliberate revisitation of *Red Rover* materials, is strikingly contemporary with its Mexican War setting and its use of steam as well as sail in a chiaroscuro of literary theory as well as maritime technology.

The Crater (1847) may be Cooper's most representative work, combining frontier, seascape, and social criticism, while foreshadowing the symbolic and religious overtones of his powerful final sea novel, *The Sea Lions*, published scarcely two years before his death in 1851.

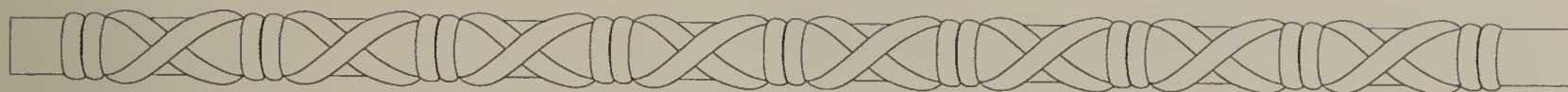
Cooper has never been seriously questioned as the inventor and master of the sea novel. Those two giants of the genre, Herman Melville and Joseph Conrad, both acknowledged an enormous debt to their predecessor. In fact, notice of Cooper's maritime works for the half-century following his death tended toward the adulatory, but in our century they have been subjected to the same kinds of scrutiny as the better-known Leatherstocking tales.

There is not room here to present a detailed critique of the maritime writings, but some

benchmarks can be identified. In the first half of this century, perhaps the most useful inquiries which charted Cooper's course as a maritime writer centered on source study. The work of Harold E. Scudder is representative: In "Cooper's *The Crater*" (1947) and "Cooper and the Barbary Coast" (1947), published respectively in *American Literature* and *PMLA*, Scudder placed Cooper firmly in the context of intellectual history and studied the transformation of source material into the narrative art of the sea novels. A decade later, Donald A. Ringe explored art in its literal sense in "James Fenimore Cooper and Thomas Cole: An Analogous Technique" (1958), a study of *The Crater* expanded in *The Pictorial Mode: Space and Time in the Art of Bryant, Irving, and Cooper* (1971). Meanwhile, in 1961 Thomas Philbrick published *James Fenimore Cooper and the Development of American Sea Fiction*, a thorough study of Cooper's responses and contributions to the shifts of taste in maritime literature; it also provides a thorough survey of the context of sea writing in the first half of the nineteenth century. Philbrick also introduced an edition of *The Crater* in 1962. *The Crater* is also at the center of "*The Crater and the Constitution*" (1971) by John P. McWilliams, Jr., later incorporated into *Political Justice in a Republic* (1972), a central study of Cooper's political theory. More recently, the rivalry between Cooper and his literary nemesis, central to the understanding of the energy and focus of the former's naval writings, has been examined by Hugh Egan in his introduction to *Proceedings of the Naval Court Martial in the Case of Alexander Slidell Mackenzie* (1992).



For biographical material, see page 333.



Readers' Forum

I recently spent a week aboard HMS *Rose*, the full-rigged wooden sail training ship, on a passage from Portland, Maine to Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. The experience, while marvelous fun and certainly educational, was also profound in many ways, and resulted in the enclosed poem. A sense of the mystery, the immediacy, and fascination of ships and the sea informs most of your articles. An occasional poem might make a pleasant addition to the journal.

Rose

I have ridden the bowsprit down the moon's
track
Glowing bow wave hissing. I have
Felt the fog's horn shiver through oaken limbs as
I lay
Safe in the bunk's dark embrace.
I have danced the flemish horse, high above the
shifting sea, and
Smelled pine forests on hidden shores. I have
seen
The whale's back, and heard the porpoise speak,
Close in the dark, perhaps to me.
I have been the ship.

Who would not want to see what I have seen,
Be where I have been,
Do what I have done?

R. BRUCE CARRUTHERS
Locust Grove, Virginia



In November of 1993, the Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments, in connection with the fourteenth annual Seminar of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, organized the Longitude Symposium at Harvard University. The reviewer, Deborah Jean Warner in the Winter 1997 *American Neptune* reviewed what can best be considered the *Cliff Notes* version of the conference, Dava Sobel's *Longitude*. Thankfully, the proceedings from that conference are available in a volume edited by William J. H. Andrewes: *The Quest for Longitude* published by the Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments. I found the Symposium an eclectic and electrifying scholarly gathering of maritime historians, horologists, and those interested in scientific instruments. The proceedings, which were three years in the making, fully justified the wait. I direct your readers' attention to this volume.

MARK ROSENSTEIN
Morristown, New Jersey



The illustrations on page 68 of the Winter 1997 volume of the *American Neptune* are without captions. I presume they are depictions of HMS *Victoria*, although I note that the top photograph shows a vessel flying an Admiral's flag, not that of a Vice-Admiral.

JOHN B. STURROCK
Boston, Massachusetts



I enjoyed Mr. R. E. Johnson's "Ships Against Forts: Charleston 7 April 1863." I should like to submit the wonderfully scathing remarks by Confederate Secretary of Navy Stephen Mallory to Commander James D. Bulloch, CSN, on the 1863 attack:

I know nothing in the history of naval warfare so humiliating to a proud people as Du Pont's recent defeat at Charleston.... After a paltry five hours' effort and the loss of but a single ship, and with some 10 to 20 only killed and wounded, the ironclad fleet which has been preparing for twelve months to capture Charleston, and which has gone forth upon its mission with all the Yankee bravado, disgracefully withdrew. If Du Pont had but possessed a spark of that flame which animated Exmouth at Algiers, Nelson at Copenhagen, or Hope and the Pei-ho, he might still have failed, but he could not have been disgraced. ORN, Ser II, 2:418.

The statement by John R. Patrick, the seaman who helped position the boiler mine in the Charleston Harbor, is revealing as to why it failed to explode under the *Ironsides*:

The wires had been cut by the man who invented the torpedo. I don't know why,

except that he had not been treated right. Lieutenant Blake was arrested and was to be tried for saying he hoped it would never go off, as it was too bad to blow people up in that way, it was not Christian. ORN Ser I, 9:768-770.

HUNT LEWIS
Norfolk, Virginia



I wonder if you would be so kind as to help me find a buyer for my back numbers of *the American Neptune*. They are all bound and in first class condition. I have Volumes 33, 34, 35, 48, and 49.

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Communication

The Three-Masted Schooner *Belle Halliday* An Update

EDWARD G. BROWNLEE

Among the perils in historical research is that one may fail to find information that later refutes or amplifies one's already-published conclusions. I recently suffered such embarrassment in the case of the coasting schooner *Belle Halliday*, which I had used as an example in my story "The Reconstruction of Coasting Schooners From Tonnage to Admeasurements," published in the Spring 1994 issue of *The American Neptune*.

The *Belle* served my purpose at that time, which was to illustrate how the form of a ship could be derived from a Tonnage Admeasurement and supplementary information. She was an unassuming little vessel, built on Cooper's Point, Camden, New Jersey, in 1869, one of a later hoard of such vessels built following the Civil War. I chose her because my particular interest in wooden shipbuilding on Cooper's Point. I also had her Tonnage Admeasurement providing the hull form, and was introduced to a photograph showing her profile. Little did I know what a trail this common little traveler had left.

In August 1995, I visited the Peabody Essex Museum and asked to see their records of information from sailmakers. I was shown a wonderful collection, Catalog No. B 1442, that contained sailmakers' plans of several South Jersey vessels. The plans are on large sheets of paper loosely stitched together with sail twine, and could not be separated for reproduction for

reasons of preservation. Lo, here I found a plan of the *Belle Halliday* and obtained a large photograph of her from the Museum. This plan reveals that sails were made for the *Halliday* in October 1883, November 1887, October 1891, and July 1897. It shows the sail plans as depicted in the photograph used for my drawing, but the masts appear to be spaced 38'6" apart in lieu of the 40'0" that I had derived from the photograph. Height of the main topmast above the deck is 107' against my 103'6". The photograph shows a low, solid weather deck rail, typical of South Jersey, extending from stern to the foremast. The sail plan erroneously shows this as an open rail with stanchions. It also shows a longhead with decoration carved on the stem, but its appearance does not agree with the second photograph found.

In 1995, while scanning microfilm files of the *New York Maritime Register* at the now named Independence Seaport Museum, I came across a news item that appears to confirm my earlier published theory on condition of the *Belle Halliday* as seen in the photograph used for my drawings. In issues of 4 May and 15 June 1898, it was reported that she was ashore at Cedar Beach, Groton, Connecticut, on 29 April, and that she was floated with assistance of cables and the tug *Rosalie*, arriving at Philadelphia on

9 June. It certainly appears that we have a match between the news account and the photograph, but unfortunately, I have not been able to date the latter.

In August 1996, I visited the Library of the Penobscot Bay Marine Museum. There I found a photograph of the *Belle Halliday* lying at a pier. The schooner was apparently in a partially loaded condition. Andy Nesdall had previously informed me of the existence of this, attributing it to Charles S. Morgan. No date is given. It is obviously our *Belle*, but seemingly in newer condition than in the photograph I had used. She carried the same head rig, but has a large long-head on the stem, with light colored decoration, not the bald head seen in the photograph used by me. When planning my drawing, I assumed that her very small forestaysail was an indication that she had had been originally rigged in a manner more typical of her birthplace and time, with the forestay leading to the bowsprit, instead of inboard, and with a very large claw-footed and bonneted forestaysail. I have since examined

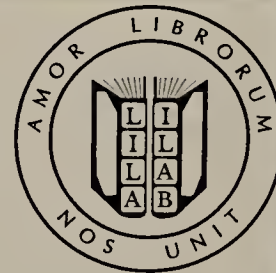
reliable paintings of similar vessels showing original headrigs with the forestay secured immediately aft of the stem head and setting four headsails. It is therefore possible that the builder placed his masts as for the earlier type of rig, and then rigged her according to later practice. Her sheer looks more pronounced. Her foremast appears to be several feet shorter than the main and mizzen, and as seen in the other photograph, seems to indicate a damage repair. The forward rigging of the coasters was highly vulnerable to damage resulting from contact with other vessels and structures.

It is probable that the *Belle Halliday* experienced many more adventures before her demise in a collision in 1910, at the venerable age of forty, and that many of these are described in existing records.

Incidentally, it seems probable that her lowermost deck, while treated as a maindeck in her admeasurement, was not fully planked. Such planking would have interfered seriously with the handling of bulk cargoes.



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Book Reviews

GEORGE F. BASS, *Shipwrecks in the Bodrum Museum of Underwater Archaeology* (College Station, TX, Institute of Nautical Archaeology). Color illustrations. Available from Institute of Nautical Archaeology, PO Drawer HG, College Station, TX 77841-5137. \$10.00.

In 1960, George Bass mounted his first underwater archaeological expedition to Turkey. The excavation was of a Late Bronze Age shipwreck (ca. 1200 BC) near Cape Gelidonya, and it proved to be the first brought to completion on the floor of the Mediterranean. The following year, he returned to Turkey and dove with sponge diver Kemal Aras of Bodrum, who showed him Byzantine wrecks off Yassiada. Bass had been diving for only a year and was still a graduate student, but was already the leading senior member of a new program of underwater archaeology at the University of Pennsylvania Museum.

During summers in Turkey, George made contact with various American military personnel stationed there and got a line on surplus equipment — from a station wagon and electric generator to mattresses and cooking gear — which were most helpful to his shoestring budget. In 1964, when he launched the *Asherah*, one of the first privately-owned manned submersibles in the US, the Navy loaned him an Army T-Boat to serve as its tender. It was at this time, at a conference on the use of research submersibles held at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, that he met Captain W. F. (Bill) Searle, USN, then the Navy's Supervisor of Salvage, and began dropping by his office when he was in the States; it turned out that Bass' father had been a professor at the US Naval Academy when Bill Searle was

studying there. Searle was able to help Bass with additional equipment, and in one case temporary personnel, which put Bass' diving operations officially into the Navy's system of statistics keeping.

The diving on those operations has been considerable. Over eleven summers dedicated to the excavation of a Bronze Age ship that sank off Turkey around 1315 BC, for example, the team put in 22,500 dives to between 145 and 200 feet on compressed air, using special tables designed for them by Duke University — and this was but a single wreck. The fact is that Dr. Bass' teams do more diving at repetitive dive depths than any other active organization in the world. This includes input on decompression schedules for repetitive diver-on-air, which was key to the success of the TWA-800 underwater search in Long Island in 1996.

Meanwhile in 1973, Dr. Bass and his able assistants, who had excavated ancient shipwrecks in Turkey, Italy, and Cyprus under the banner of the University Museum, were able to strike out on their own with the newly formed American Institute of Nautical Archaeology (AINA). Among the early members were his close colleagues Michael and Susan Katzev, who had raised and reconstructed a classical Greek ship near Kyrenia, Cyprus. The success of AINA was immediate.

Governor of Massachusetts Sir William Phipps; Senators Leverett Saltonstall and Lowell Weiker; writer and politician Clare Booth Luce; author, submersible inventor, and explorer Edwin A. Link; legendary underwater acoustics scientist Harold Edgerton of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Admiral William A. Sullivan of WWII salvage fame; Rear Admiral J. Bradford Mooney, USN (ret.), holder of the

world's depth record for DRVs and deep recovery vehicles; early underwater explorer Dr. William Beebe and his assistant Mrs. Gloria Hollister Anable, who for many years held the world's record for dives into the sea — all these and others have been fascinated by underwater archaeology and the silence aboard ships that lie on the sea bottom.

By 1976, the new organization was wooed by, and then given quarters at, Texas A&M University. In the process, the archaeologists decided, because of some experiences overseas, and because of an expanding international staff and board of directors, to change the name of the organization to eliminate the connotation of official sanctification, sponsorship, or claims as its agent. The new name, Institute of Nautical Archaeology (INA) became well known and respected as one of the most credible archaeology units in the world as Bass and his colleagues excavated more shipwrecks in Turkey, from Bronze Age through medieval times, while spreading their field research to Kenya, Italy, Israel, Egypt, Eritrea, the Caribbean, and North America.

This book is an excellent one. With about one hundred color illustrations, it has a pictures-to-words ratio comparable to *National Geographic Magazine*. The most important thing to realize when you read this small paperback is that every single thing that the INA has picked up from the bottom of the sea off Turkey over the last twenty-odd years has a place in Bodrum. Some of the items are in storage, others are on display, but everything that the INA has ever taken from the bottom is there. There have been neither windfall profits nor pay television projects, although many think there should be.

This small book will be of invaluable use to anyone doing archaeology research in the Mediterranean, or in another sea for that matter. Dr. Bass has lectured around the world on this subject and has been a Visiting Professor at the University of Aberdeen and a Visiting Scholar at Cambridge University. Now the Abell/Yamini Distinguished Professor of Nautical Archaeology at Texas A&M University in College Station, he also serves as President of INA. At this time, he and his colleagues are busily at work on a ninth-

century medieval wreck near Bozburun, Turkey, and have just discovered two wrecks of the fifth century BC that they hope to excavate in the future. Because photography, cataloguing, drawing, and laboratory conservation of artifacts, followed by library research, take two years for every month they dive, he and his team keep busy.

This book will also be sought by people who want to go to Turkey just to see the operation and want to take a record of it home. Bodrum is now a major tourist center on the shores of the Aegean just opposite the Greek island of Kos. There are commercial scuba diving shops and courses, at least one run by a former Turkish archaeologist who once worked on INA projects.

CAPTAIN W. F. SEARLE, JR., USN (RET.)
Alexandria, Virginia

W. JEFFREY BOLSTER, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). xiii + 310 pages, illustrations, maps, tables, notes, index. Hardcover. ISBN 0-674-07624-9. \$27.00.

This very noteworthy book describes a too-long-neglected aspect of African American, American, and naval history. Moreover, W. Jeffrey Bolster shows himself most imminently qualified to examine and portray the varied aspects of this slighted historical subject. Professor Bolster, a licenced master mariner with a decade of shipboard experience, commences his intriguing and extensive narrative by noting the conspicuous presence of African sailors from the beginning of Western European colonization of the New World until the earliest seventeenth century English American settlements. He combines this chronicle with a survey of maritime practices in West Africa, from boatmen navigating dugout canoes along rivers and coastlines to the *grumetes* working for Europeans, primarily as enslavers.

The emergence of chattel slavery within Britain's American empire had concurrent maritime effects on its black populace. Many

African Americans took to piracy as a means to freedom; other black seafarers participated in establishing a black communication network that centered in London; many others, through their varied experiences, became "part of the process by which black people forged a complex though not homogeneous racial identity" (page 35).

The expanding English colonial and later American mercantile economy also created new seaborne roles for blacks. During the period from about 1740 to 1820, men of color appeared in increasing numbers on sailing vessels. Despite racial differences, the obligatory shipboard need for teamwork sharply reduced ethnic antagonisms and increased interracial cooperation. For black crewmen, these needs opened opportunities for advancement to responsible posts aboard maritime craft, and in several instances they resulted in personal freedom.

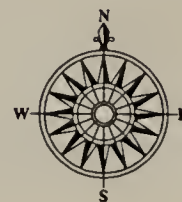
The experiences of captive black seamen in Britain's foreboding Dartmoor Gaol during the War of 1812 illustrated their emergent prestige, self-reliance, and even national pride. There, African American prisoners of war, although remanded to separate quarters, established their own self-rule government. From their unique position, these black detainees displayed their own brand of patriotism before their British captors, and they joined the white inmates in sports, gambling, evangelical religious services, trading at the prison market, theatrical productions, storytelling, and dancing. Peace brought release to the remaining Dartmoor prisoners in 1815, a time that Bolster shows also marked the apex of African American maritime prominence. Almost twenty percent of American seamen were black, and some black seamen commanded vessels with all black crews. These mariners acted as communicators, circulating reports of slave resistance, and influencing the evolving American abolitionist movement. They had become envied figures within both free and slave communities in the United States. Paradoxically, as Bolster notes, seafaring also "drew away many of the best and brightest young men just as free black communities were trying to establish themselves" (page 159).

Status and work opportunities for black mariners declined from the 1820s onward, with

ramifications throughout the African American community. Bolster cites a multitude of causes for this regression. In Southern coastal states, fears of subversion from free black seamen, particularly after the Denmark Vesey Plot (1822) and David Walker's inflammatory *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* (1829), provided "Negro Seamen's Acts" through which thousands of free black seamen were incarcerated during southern port calls. A concurrent upsurge in racism through the United States also had adverse effects for African American seamen. Furthermore, with a pronounced growth in European immigration, increasing class stratification within American society, and the shift in hiring responsibilities from owners or ship captains to unsavory, often biased "crimps," men of color found themselves increasingly edged out of the maritime job market. Western expansion offering attractive homesteading opportunities, industrialization, and technological changes such as petroleum discoveries that reduced opportunities to serve on whaling ships, were additional factors leading to the demise of black maritime culture and the formal establishment of Jim Crow shipboard practices.

This book stands out within the growing number of published works concerning African American history. Professor Bolster displays a superb knowledge of nautical practices and maritime life, and provides an extraordinary list of primary and secondary sources, including personal narratives. Perhaps some mention might have been made of the small but noticeable number of black mariners imprisoned in Revolutionary War gaols in Britain, or African American seamen's combat activities on armed vessels, but these are very minor suggestions. Professor Bolster's distinguished historical study has clearly opened welcome new vistas.

SHELDON S. COHEN
Loyola University of Chicago



ALEXANDER DALRYMPLE, *An Account of the Discoveries made in the South Pacific Ocean, First Printed in 1767* (Sydney, Australia: Hordern House Rare Books Pty., 77 Victoria Street, Sydney 2011, for the Australian National Maritime Museum, 1996). 103 pages, illustrations. Deluxe edition ISBN 1-875567-15-1. Regular edition ISBN 1-875567-13-5.

Sailor, cartographer, visionary, and imperial “fixer,” the amazing Scot, Alexander Dalrymple, bestrode the geographical world of the late eighteenth century like a colossus. His impact on the European world of scientific inquiry was extensive, and his enthusiasm for British discoveries in the South Pacific was equally remarkable, for it was he who would have hoped to command the barque *Endeavour* on that famous first voyage of James Cook to the Society Islands with the purpose of observing the Transit of Venus.

The father of the Hydrographic Office, Dalrymple was also an assiduous student of history — and the voyages and reports of his predecessors. This work is a reprinting of the 1767 London edition. It is Number Three in the Australian Maritime Series, and represents a fruitful partnership between a superb publisher and an energetic museum. Dr. Kevin Foster, Director of the Australian National Maritime Museum, is determined to better establish Dalrymple’s rightful place in Australian maritime history. He succeeds admirably. Dr. Andrew Cook, Dalrymple authority, provides a learned treatise on Dalrymple which is likely to be unsurpassed as a model introduction to this useful, handsome book.

BARRY GOUGH
Wilfrid Laurier University
Waterloo, Ontario



JOSEPH A. WHITEHORNE, *The Battle of Baltimore: 1814* (Baltimore: Nautical and Avia-

tion Publishing Company of America, 1997). 262 pages, illustrations, bibliography, appendices, index. \$24.95.

The Battle of Baltimore returns once again to the shores of the Patapsco River in Lt. Colonel Whitehorne’s new literary endeavor *The Battle of Baltimore: 1814*. This is Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America’s third book on the War of 1812. Whitehorne’s previous *While Washington Burned: The Battle of Fort Erie: 1814* is a preamble and companion history to the Chesapeake campaign.

As a historian for the past eighteen years on the ramparts of Fort McHenry, where the British fiery bombardment inspired “The Star-Spangled Banner,” I found in this book new insights into the Chesapeake campaign and that “nest of pirates” Baltimore. The year is 1814, the third year of the War of 1812. In late August, our nation’s capital lay in a fiery glow that could be seen in Baltimore. It seemed as if the young American maritime republic was finished. In a sweeping review of the political and military intrigue that led to the darkest hour of the war, Whitehorne provides a renewal of this most climactic maritime victory at Baltimore. It signaled the end of the war on the Chesapeake, and within four months the end of the war in America. Decius Wadsworth, Chief of Ordnance Department in 1814, concluded after the war: “Hereafter, we can look confidently in the Face of any Nation which may feel a disposition to trample on our rights.” Hezekiah Niles, the Baltimore editor and publisher of *Niles’ Weekly Register*, America’s foremost contemporary chronicler of the war, would also be pleased. As the defenders of 1814 would say if they were to read the book that chronicled their achievements — “Huzza! — Colonel Whitehorne!”

SCOTT S. SHEADS
Fort McHenry National Monument
Baltimore, Maryland

ANDREW GORDON, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996). 708

pages, 40 illustrations, 24 maps, 4 drawings, notes, source references, index. Hardcover. ISBN 1-55750-718-X. \$48.95.

The two main events examined by *The Rules of the Game* are the sinking of the flagship of the British Mediterranean Fleet, the battleship *Victoria*, in 1893 after her collision with a consort, and the battle of Jutland, an engagement between the British and German battle fleets in 1916. The *Victoria* disaster killed and discredited the commanding admiral, Sir George Tryon, the inventor of a flexible system of tactics that relied more on the initiative of subordinates and less on centralized control through inherently unwieldy methods of signaling. A number of British failures in command at the battle of Jutland were caused by the rigidity of British tactical doctrine, inability of subordinate commanders to act without orders, and confusion caused by communication errors. For Gordon, the relationship between the two occurrences was one of cause and effect: had Tryon survived his tenure of command without mishap, and managed "to instill his action-principles into the service as a whole, who can doubt that the Jutland generation of flag-officers would have been better prepared for the surprises and opportunities of battle? — indeed in some cases different men might have reached the top" (page 399).

The presentation of this proposition in the form of a rhetorical question indicates its problematical character. In any case, the strength of the book does not lie in the integrity of its central logic. This is because Gordon uses his two main events as the hooks upon which to hang a remarkable tapestry of psychological, social, cultural, technical, and institutional observation about the leadership of the Royal Navy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This "portrait of an age" was produced from a broad surveillance of primary and secondary sources and the deployment of insights derived from his personal experience of academic and naval organizations, and Norman Dixon's *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence*. Not all of Gordon's illustrations are apropos. Discussions of certain technical issues, such as naval gunnery and warship design, and policy contexts betray

inaccurate comprehension of secondary material. These hardly matter. The overall effect remains convincing and fascinating: a depiction of real people and their relationships within a large and complex organization and social milieu over a quarter century.

Gordon's explication of the two main events are narrative and analytical achievements of a high order — the hooks, in other words, are fully up to the task of bearing the weight of the tapestry. A practitioner's understanding of seamanship and navigation, studied knowledge of signaling and its history, firm command of the anecdote make his accounts of the sinking of the *Victoria* and the battle of Jutland comprehensible and compelling. In both cases, Gordon achieves a degree of verisimilitude about human affairs that surpass all previous work on the subject.

What is less satisfying is the use to which the combination of *histoire totale* and *petite histoire* are put. Both are made the basis for discussion of the tendency of all military organizations during long periods of peace to develop rigid doctrine and favor the promotion of those with command personae that are prone to fail under war conditions. The existence of this phenomenon comports with common sense and common knowledge of the dynamics of hierarchical organizations, civilian as well as military. Gordon's examination of this matter in his last chapter is instructive and amusing, and his catalogue of "blinding glimpses of the obvious" (page 579) is consistent with his previous broad depiction of the politics and culture of British naval officers. While Gordon's general account of naval politics and culture and particular analysis of the *Victoria* disaster plausibly support his conclusions, the attribution of British leadership shortcomings at Jutland primarily to socio-psychological factors is dangerously reductionist.

It is undeniable that a mix of sociology, personality, and culture affected the character of the Royal Navy's leadership and thus the quality of its operational decision making during the First World War. However, many other large forces that shaped command mindsets were also at work between 1893 and 1916: severe shortages of officers (with a consequent lowering in standards) caused by the rapid expansion of the

Navy; the replacement of the simple line of battle with a numerically much larger and complex combined arms force (cruisers and flotilla as well as battleships) that was harder to control; continuous changes in weapons performance that disrupted the formulation and assimilation of doctrine; the politicization of the officer corps caused by bitter internal power struggles and the pointed attention of press and parliament; a shift in the most likely main enemy that transformed strategic mission; intelligence assessments of the tactical intentions of prospective opponents; fundamental alterations in the relationship of fire and movement introduced by increases in the effective range of naval artillery; and financial shortages that interfered with both the amount and realism of tactical experiment, to name other factors that are either ignored altogether or not given their due.

Gordon's assessment of British naval command at Jutland is thus incomplete and seriously so, and the relationship of his case study to his conclusions is thus weaker than it appears. The chapters on Jutland may still serve as illustrative to a degree of the negative effects of a corrupted promotion process and doctrinal error. These issues, judging from recent articles in naval professional journals, are of great concern, and for good reason. However, sound practical history is a matter of rigor as well as relevance. A comprehensive examination of the factors affecting the choice and attitudes of British naval leadership during the quarter century that preceded Jutland might have yielded more than the moral tale and list of general cautions Gordon provides. Such a study, as a historical analysis and analytical phenomenon, could have informed critical discussions of the manifold particular aspects of present day naval officer selection and no less importantly, education in its basic, advanced, and continuing forms.

The foregoing critique notwithstanding, *The Rules of the Game* is a marvelous work. Although Gordon may have driven the star of his team of historical dogs to jump through one social scientific hoop too many, the program in its entirety still dazzles. The unconventional breaking of chronology should not work, but does so brilliantly. If a few sentences sound

better than they make sense, the causes are welcome — enthusiasm and a desire to avoid dead academic prose. Policy historians have almost universally ignored the sociology of navies; Gordon's treatment opens up a new and rich frontier of inquiry. Command, tactics, doctrine, and signaling are of fundamental importance to the understanding of how navies fight — Gordon's contributions here are original and substantial, and suggest that practically all previous operational naval histories suffer from significant analytical shortcomings. Casual readers will be diverted, serious ones informed as well as entertained, and scholarly experts admonished with the example of a book that embodies a rare combination of major substance and easy accessibility.

JON SUMIDA
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland



ANDREW FALTUM, *The Essex Aircraft Carriers* (Baltimore: Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1996). 216 pages, photographs, diagrams, maps, notes, appendices, glossary, bibliography, index. ISBN 1-877853-26-7. \$39.95.

Essex class carriers were arguably the most famous US naval vessels of World War II. Their remarkable careers continued through the Korean War, into the Vietnam War and beyond, a long service life considering the vast changes in aircraft technology, changes which directly affected these ships. Much has been written about these carriers, both from operational and design standpoints. One of the latest books to describe these vessels is Andrew Faltum's *The Essex Aircraft Carriers*.

Faltum's format is conventional. Following an introduction on early carrier designs, there is a chapter on the design of these carriers; a chapter on specific portions of the ships; chapters on

building them, their aircraft and aircrews, and flight and shipboard operations. The main portion of the book concerns combat operations, primarily of World War II but also Korea and Vietnam. Other chapters describe modifications done to upgrade carriers, such as the addition of angled decks, and other topics such as the use of ships as recovery vessels for the Mercury and Apollo space missions. The final chapter, just three pages, describes the final disposition of several of the carriers, notably *Yorktown*, *Intrepid*, and *Lexington*. Four appendices, one on ship data, a second on brief histories of individual ships, a third on aircraft data, and a final one on camouflage patterns worn by the vessels, complete the book.

The line drawings on the endpapers and of the various camouflage measures are very well done. The same cannot be said for the photos, most of which come out gray and somewhat grainy. The contrast in many of them is very poor, causing much detail to be lost. What is also surprising is that there are no detail shots of various portions of these vessels to correspond to the written descriptions of these sections in the chapter on the "Anatomy of an Aircraft Carrier." Such pictures would have enhanced the book greatly.

There are a few errors in the book, but none serious enough to be of great concern. However, the book's briefness (less than 160 pages of text, not counting the appendices) mitigates against it being a very useful book. Norman Friedman's *U.S. Aircraft Carriers* (Naval Institute Press, 1983) provides a much more thorough description of the class' design as well as operational history. The section on combat operations consists of not much more than potted histories of the various naval actions in the Pacific. Andrew Faltum, however, cannot be faulted for this. From late 1943 on, the naval war in the Pacific was really a story of the *Essex* carriers in action. It took S. E. Morrison several volumes to describe these actions, space that Faltum does not have.

The Essex Aircraft Carriers could have been a better book if Mr. Faltum had delved more deeply into the design development of these important ships, as well as described more

completely their "anatomy" and construction. As it stands now, *The Essex Aircraft Carriers* is a nice introduction to these ships, but is not an essential addition to one's library.

WILLIAM T. Y'BLOOD
Air Force History Support Office
Washington, DC

FRASER MCKEE AND ROBERT DARLINGTON, *The Canadian Naval Chronicle 1939-1945: The Successes and Losses of the Canadian Navy in World War II* (Vanwell Publishing, Ltd: St. Catherines, Ontario, 1996) 272 pages, photographs, tables, indices, bibliography. Cloth, 10¼" x 7¼". ISBN 1-55125-032-2. \$39.95 Canadian.

In 1939, on the eve of the Second World War, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) was one of the world's smallest combatant fleets; by 1945, it was one of the world's largest. However, few people are aware of its role in this titanic struggle. This is in part because the vast majority of its sailors toiled in smaller, less glamorous warships. This aptly-titled volume addresses this shortcoming, by chronicling the RCN's successes and failures. Fraser McKee needs no introduction to students of the Canadian Navy, and in this work he has teamed up with another RCN veteran, Robert Darlington.

This volume is divided into six chapters of disparate lengths, each of which is based on a particular war year. Surprisingly, the text begins with 1940 and concludes with 1945. Apparently, there were no successes or losses of note in 1939, and this clearly highlights one of the weaknesses of this approach. The authors have added a list of photo credits, along with eight very informative tables. One of the latter lists the successes of the Royal Canadian Air Force against Dönitz' dreaded gray wolves. Others briefly summarize the information presented in the book, or add other information, such as Canadian merchant ships lost as a result of enemy action. The authors have also included four separate and clearly defined indices. In addition, this work features a detailed bibliogra-

phy as well as a useful combined glossary and abbreviations list.

Each of the sixty-four entries, or chapters of the book, is supported by a selected bibliography and one or more photographs of the ships, and sometimes individuals, involved in that action. For the most part, the pictures are properly identified — one notable exception being the identification of HMS *Revenge* as the HMCS *Revenge*. As the subtitle suggests, all the losses suffered by the RCN — whatever the cause — and its successes are listed in strict chronological order. The authors have resolved some of the questions that have intrigued researchers. These include the identity of some submarines that the RCN destroyed, as well as determining the credit for some sinkings. All the major entries list the names of the RCN personnel lost in that action.

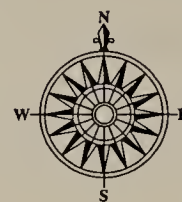
For the most part, the entries are well written, carefully researched, and succinct. It appears that no loss was too small to be included, *e.g.*, the loss of the armed yachts HMCS *Otter* and *Raccoon* are discussed. The authors also detail the many ships lost in collisions with supposedly friendly ships. For example, the first entry discusses the fate of HMCS *Ypres*, a gate vessel in Halifax Harbor, which was accidentally rammed by HMS *Revenge* in May 1940. The authors also detail the special “welcome” afforded to this battleship when she returned to Halifax. They also argue that the RCN suffered from a dramatic drop in efficiency during the final months of the war. Their speculation that the tragic losses of 1945 were due to the growing sense of victory is certainly plausible. One hopes that this lesson will never have to be relearned.

Although this work is not intended to be a reference work on all aspects of the role of Canada's navy in World War II, the lack of a good introduction to her naval policy and history is unfortunate. This failure is all the more disappointing because the reader has no idea of why the RCN had so few successes in 1939–1940. McKee and Darlington do not directly compare the successes of the RCN with those of its major allies, but they do offer a table which clearly shows the high degree of international teamwork that marked the Allied success in the Battle of the Atlantic. However, they do provide us with

some interesting nuggets of information, including the round-about way through which the RCN procured some American yachts that it outfitted as patrol vessels.

This work should be an invaluable addition to the library of anyone with a strong interest in either the history of the RCN or the Battle of the Atlantic in World War II.

PETER K. H. MISPELKAMP
Pointe Claire, Ontario



Shorter Notices

JENNY SARRAZIN AND ANDRE VAN HOLK, *Schopper und Zillen: Eine Einführung in den traditionellen Holzschiffbau im Gebiet der deutschen Donau* (Hamburg: Ernst Kabel Verlag and Bremerhaven, Deutsches Schifffahrtsmuseum, 1996). 205 pages, illustrations, bibliography. ISBN 3-8225-0334-7. DM 98.

On the upper Danube in Bavaria between Ulm and Passau (roughly), there exists a long tradition of the construction and use for fishing and transportation of flat-bottomed wooden boats of various sizes. This oversized, well-illustrated (in black-and-white), and scholarly volume traces the history, construction, and use of such vessels both past and present. Many forms of *zille*, as they are called, are illustrated both in historic photographs and plans (*schopper* is a dialect word for their builders). Although certainly a study in German maritime history (the text is in German throughout), this book should interest the small-boat enthusiast as well.

JOHN HATTENDORF, ED., *Maritime History, Volume 2: The Eighteenth Century and the Classic Age of Sail* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing, 1997). xvi + 304 pages, index, illustrations. Hardcover. ISBN 1-57524-007-6. Paper. ISBN 0-89464-944-2.

The second volume in this fine series is based upon a summer institute held at the John Carter Brown Library in August 1993. The work is divided into twenty-four chapters in four parts. In Part I, Glyndwr Williams considers the opening of the Pacific from several viewpoints. Karel Davids and Willem F. J. Morzer Bruyns in the following eight chapters treat various aspects of the science and practice of navigation. In Part III, Daniel Baugh and N. A. M. Rodger outline "the struggle for empire" through the era, with one additional chapter by Benjamin Labaree on American colonial commerce. The final part is something of a catch-all, with four chapters by R. J. B. Knight on the economic, technological, and naval legacies of the empire. Thomas Philbrick, in the final selection, adds the dimension of "romanticism and the literature of the sea."

GREG KENNEDY AND KEITH NEILSON, EDS., *Far-Flung Lines: Essays on Imperial Defence in Honour of Donald Mackenzie Schurman* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1996). 228 pages, bibliography. Hardcover. ISBN 0-7146-4683-0. Paper. ISBN 0-7146-4219-9. \$22.50.

Donald Schurman has influenced many historians on both sides of the Atlantic from his posts at Canada's Queen's University and Royal Military College since his first major book, *The Education of a Navy: The Development of British Naval Strategic Thought, 1867-1914* (1965). This collection of eight essays is a fitting tribute to a distinguished scholar of imperial defense (among other subjects). Karl Revells discusses the Crimean era, while John Beeler takes on the following half century to 1905. Nicholas Lambert studies the Pacific in 1909-1914, and David French the empire and USA in British 1917

strategy. Keith Neilson focuses upon the Middle East and India, 1914-1918, John Ferris on the "last decade of British maritime supremacy, 1919-1929," and Orest Babij continues the story from 1928 to 1934. Greg Kennedy concludes with a "snapshot" of imperial defense in the Far East in 1935. None of these papers has apparently been published previously; each is supplied with appropriate citations. Taken all together, this is an important work for those concerned with the role of the Royal Navy in the widest imperial context over the years 1854-1935.

PHILIP KAPLAN AND JACK CURRIE, *Wolfpack: U-Boats at War, 1939-1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997). 240 pages, index, bibliography, 115 color illustrations, 130 black-and-white illustrations. ISBN 1-55750-855-0. \$34.95.

The dust jacket of this slightly oversized (10" x 10") book makes the claim, no doubt correct, that it is the "first major colour-illustrated book to capture life on board a U-boat." It is certainly an interesting collection, accompanied by appropriate text, and indeed some of the photographs are as evocative as scenes from *Das Boot*. On the other hand, despite what was clearly a major piece of research, it must be confessed that the corpus of such material is simply not that vast. The result is that a considerable number of the illustrations are of paintings (some most handsome), posters, dockside scenes — past and present — and other supplemental material. Ironically, moss seems to be growing out of the concrete bunkers at Bordeaux in a 1996 photo (page 14) — but the unintended concrete monument still stands to the men of the Ubootwaffe. Despite its limitations, this is an unusual collection which will appeal to more than just the submarine specialist.

BRITON C. BUSCH
Colgate College
Hamilton, New York

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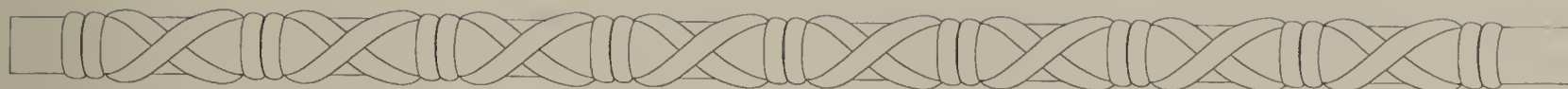
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Abbey, Melrose
Alida, Maria en
American, Fair
Anne, Princess
Arent, Vergulde
Augusta, Princess
Belt, Little
Bound, Homeward
Buren, Van
Catherine, Maria
Charlotte, Queen
China, Empress of
Court, Nailsea
Creole, La Juene
d'Artois, Comte
De Twee Goe
Vrinden

du Havre, Ville
Earn, Loch
Elisabeth, St.
Faem, van
Vlaenderen
Francis, Thomas
and
Halliday, Belle
Hildegonda, Jonge
Hoop, Nieuwe
Impala, Empire
Ironsides, New
Ironsides, Old
Joseph, Saint
Klerk, General de
Lakeland, Empire
Lamy, Fort

Louis, St.
Marti, José
Michael, St. (ex-
Vergulde Arent)
Mundi, Salvador
Onze-Lieve-Vrouw
ter Bijstand
Pariel, Sans
Paris, Ville de
Paris, City of
Paso, El
Paul, St.
Pedro, San
Pieter, St. (ex-Perel)
Putnik, Vojvoda
Read, Abner
Richard, Bon

Homme
Rome, City of
Royal, Anne
Sovereign, Royal
Squash, Molly
State, Palmetto
States, United
Sucré, Mariscal
Turk, Grand
Victory, Mandan
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35	1975	x	x	x	x
36	1976	x	x	x	x
37	1977	x	x	x	x
38	1978	x	x	x	x
39	1979	x	x	x	x
40	1980	x	x	x	x
41	1981	x	x	x	x
42	1982		x	x	x
43	1983		x	x	x
44	1984		x		x
45	1985	x	x	x	x
46	1986	x	x	x	x
47	1987		x	x	x
48	1988	x	x	x	x
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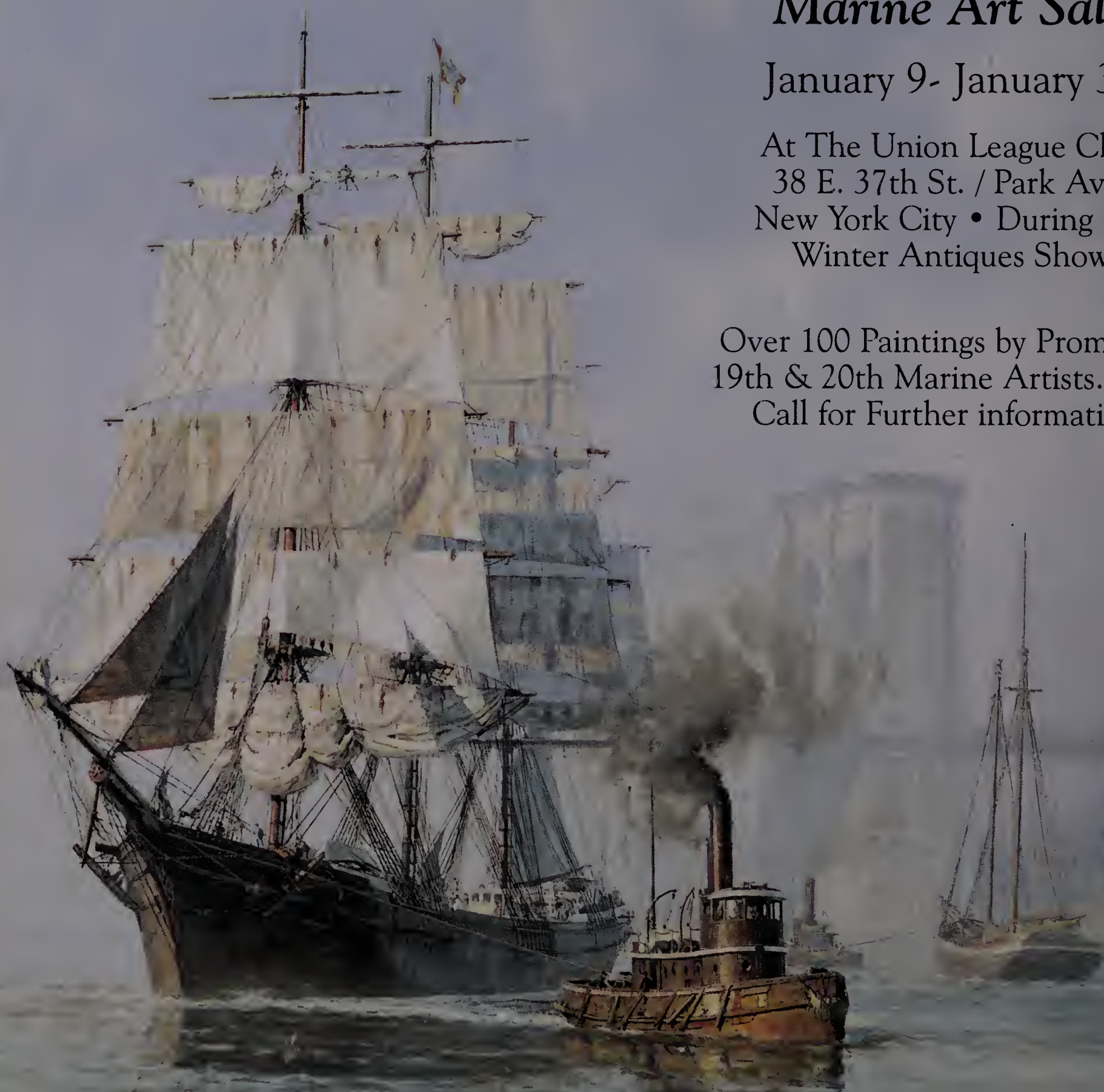
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